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PRIORITIES FOR STANDARDIZATION PROGRAMS

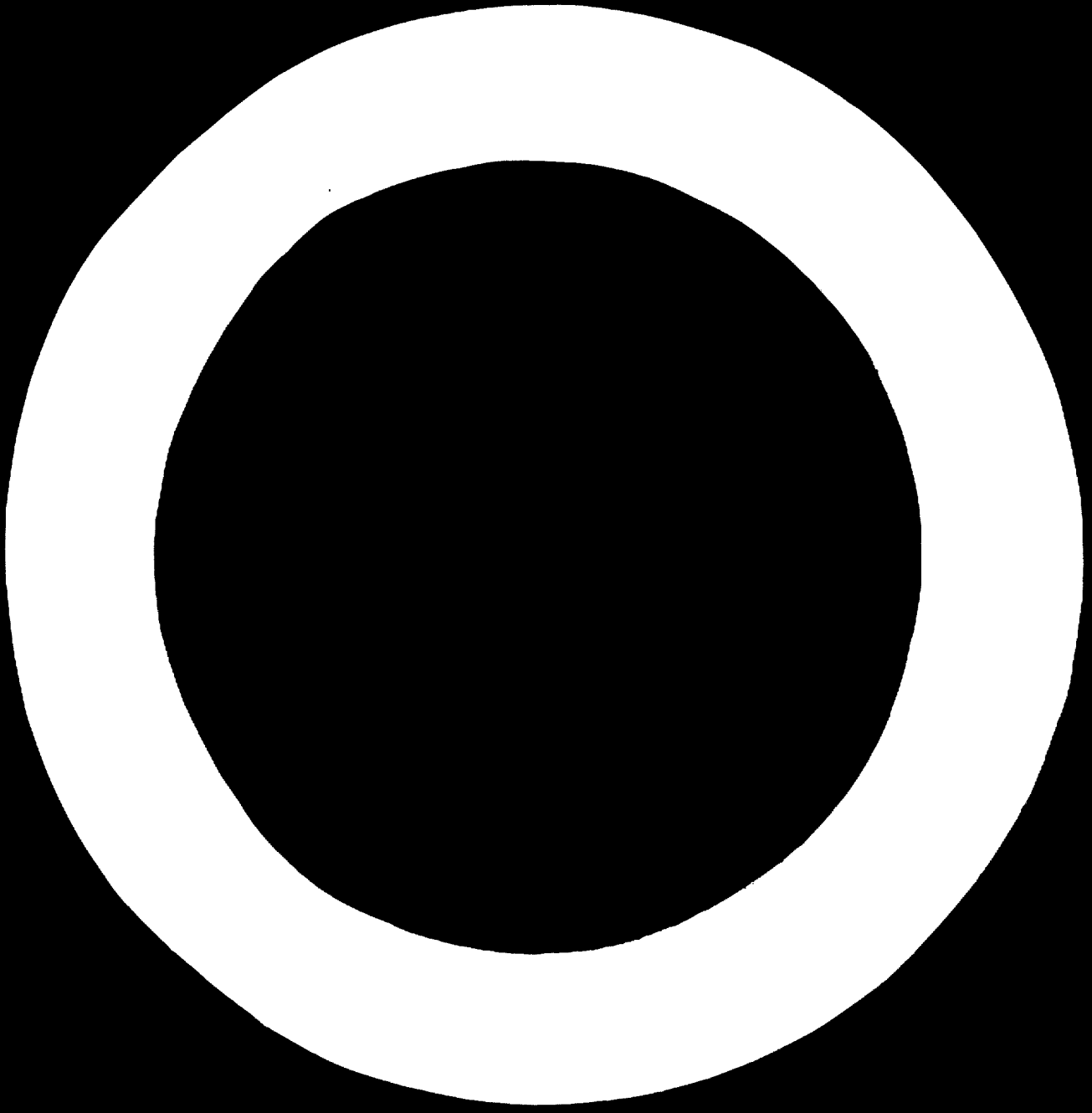
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PRIORITIES FOR STANDARDIZATION PROGRAMMES

Introduction

A fundamental problem, but one of the most difficult ones for any standardisation institute which has initiated its activities, lies in the choice of a programme of work and determination of priorities.

It would seem that the problem could be solved by ascertaining which aspects of basic or processing production are most important in the domestic and export markets.

However, in practice, the answer is not so simple. Technical and economic support is not always forthcoming from the sectors concerned by these studies; this is so for various reasons, one of which may be genuine inability to provide the assistance.

Without it, there can be no certainty that the institute is establishing standards which meet the requirements of the country rather than merely translating foreign standards documentation which it will be impossible to apply in practice owing to technological factors, legal provisions, market diversification, etc.

The institute must none the less set itself a programme of work which will be adjusted as it demonstrates its own ability in solving the country's problems.

1. Need to establish priorities

Standardisation is not a theoretical science, but the practical reflection of a given technological and social development.

This means that the order of priorities should be related to the needs of the consumer market, the development policies laid down by the government and possibilities for action in the international market.

But if the sectors which must co-operate in the study of the standards thus selected are not technically capable, must the work of the institute be held back?

We believe, on the contrary, that each of the aspects involved in a possible programme of work must be weighed and analysed with the utmost care, and those undertaken for which support can be obtained from all sectors: general interests, consumption and production.

If the programme is selected in such a way that the economic importance of standardisation can quickly be demonstrated, the next steps will be much easier because it will be the institute which will have to gauge its work capacity in view of the requests which it receives. This means that, in laying down priorities, the following basic factors must be borne in mind:

- 1.1 The real needs of the country with regard to both its domestic market and its possible export market;
- 1.2 The possibility of technical and economic support by the sectors concerned;
- 1.3 Manpower and technological possibilities of the country. For this reason, a standardization programme does not always appear coherent to the independent observer, but it will be a good one if it ensures the carrying out of the studies and gives the institute prestige and confidence.

2. Availability of infrastructures required for industrialization

It is exceedingly important, when an industrialization programme is being planned in a country, that the elements required for it should be present.

To my knowledge, few Latin American countries have had adequate manpower and technological organization when initiating their industrialization. It must not be forgotten that the two world wars compelled the countries of the continent to seek within their own frontiers that which would enable them to maintain their own standard of living and level of development, since they were virtually isolated from the outside world.

In addition, at the same time, a technological and social transformation of such importance was taking place in the world that raw materials, the main sources of wealth in most of our countries, were losing their relative value, and this gave rise to all the movements which are too obvious to need to be brought out in this paper.

This created the need for these countries to industrialize in order to be able to dispense as far as possible with imports and to process their products so as to increase their value.

This movement has not yet reached a state of equilibrium, but it is generally agreed that industrialization is not achieved simply through decrees or decisions of a political nature, but is governed by a number of complex factors: technology, economics, protective laws which must constantly be overcome, etc.

Standardisation is a basic factor here because, in a real sense, it lays down the minimum requirements which make materials, products or equipment suitable for the use which is to be made of them and competitive.

3. Importance of standardization for industrial rationalization

Standardization, in other words the application of standards in production, when carried out taking into account all relevant technical and economic factors, plays a direct and decisive part in rationalization in industry because, inter alia, it can bring about:

- 3.1 A precise knowledge of consumption requirements;
- 3.2 Technical regulation of these requirements, resulting in standardisation;
- 3.3 Better utilisation of equipment, raw materials and labour;
- 3.4 The need for means of production and quality control systems making possible production within the boundaries laid down by the standard.

4. Scope of application of standards

Standards, by their very nature, must as a rule be applied on a voluntary basis.

Only in matters relating to health, hygiene or public safety should they be included in regulations or codes with force of law; when they are included, however, this should be done in such a way that it does not interfere with the technological process.

Action should be taken to ensure that the relevant authorities, in their role of consumers, will adopt the standards, thereby obviating the present diversification, which hinders the establishment of an economical industry.

In order to provide greater incentive to industrialists voluntarily deciding to manufacture in accordance with the standards prescribed by the national standardisation institute, Governments should lay down promotion laws which exempt them from certain tax provisions.

The possibility that financial agencies, when considering a specific credit policy, will take into account compliance with standards in fixing percentages to be applied should also be studied.

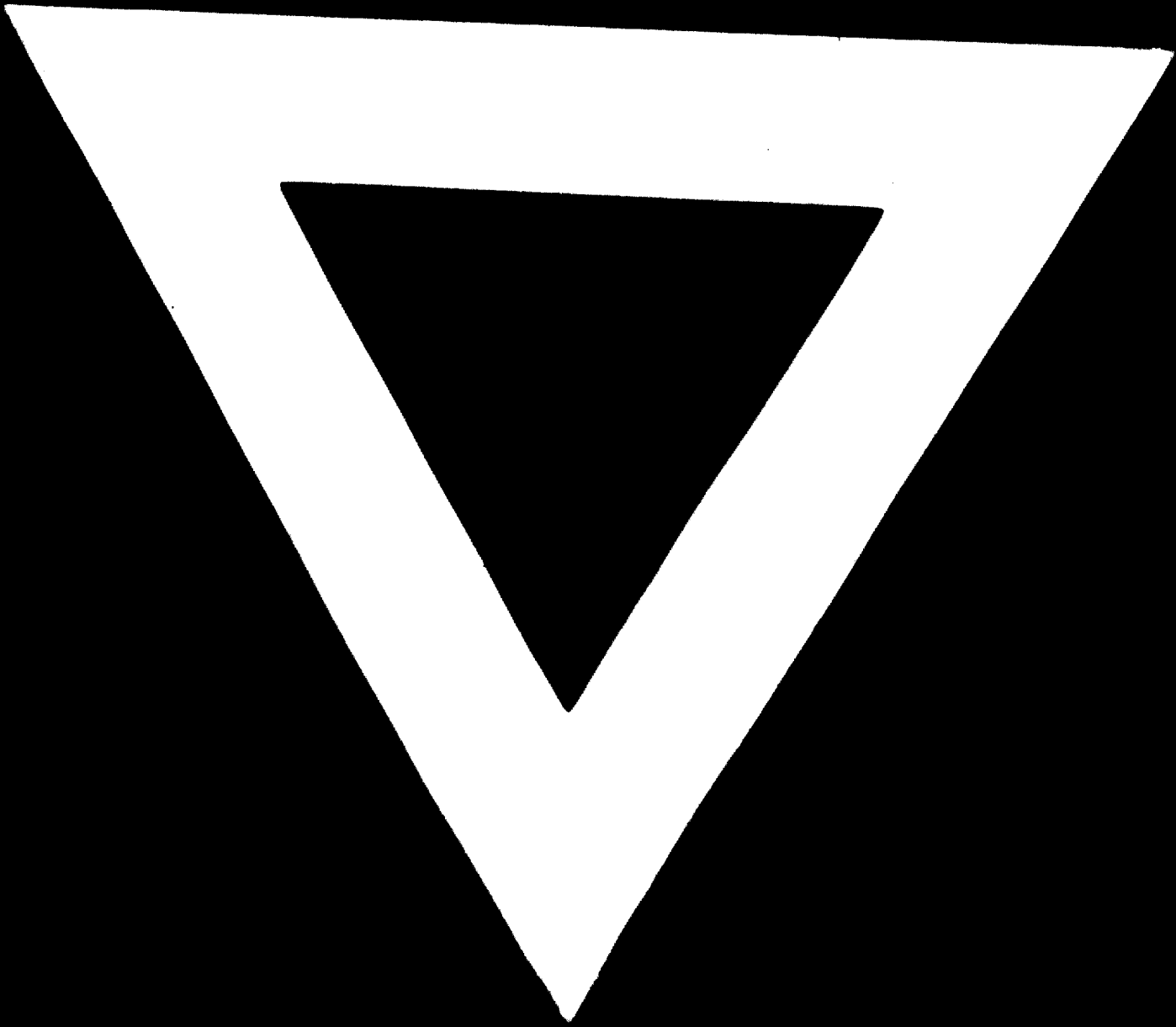
Efforts should be made to obtain the same treatment from insurance companies as regards the premiums for production which complies with standards accepted in the international market.

5. Priority areas for standardisation in Latin America

The shortage of low-cost and medium-cost housing is a serious problem throughout Latin America.

There is a constant concern to seek approaches which make it possible to replace traditional methods and materials with new systems, and this calls for an extensive study involving research and the fixing of basic standards which is not of obvious economic interest. Special financial and technical support will be required by national institutes for implementing a coherent programme in this respect at both the domestic and Pan-American levels.

Other important areas might be foodstuffs, the textile industry, iron and steel making, the fixing of standards for basic equipment, etc., depending on the domestic requirements and possibilities of each country and its desire to take part in the regional and international markets as permitted by its possibilities.



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