

is under productive and protective forest reserves. The attendant benefits of prosperity have permeated into all phases of life, in the forms of modern health and medical facilities, roads, railways, schools and universities, and social services. Equally striking was the parallel expansion of population following upon the influx of great numbers of immigrants from China, India and Indonesia.

In the early days of the colonial era the major problem was the comparatively straightforward one of locating the natural resources of the country, assessing their potentialities and developing them. Development was along *laissez faire* lines. The colonial government regulated many, and established some, of the economic and social institutions necessary for such development to take place. Likewise it brought stability to a land once racked by internal strife, and ensured that the returns of production were not seized upon by the exercise of arbitrary right. In an atmosphere which saw everyone preoccupied with making a living, and some with accumulating a fortune, it was not surprising that politics were relegated to the background. There was little friction among the different peoples not only because there was plenty of land and room for expansion, but also because they did not compete for the same jobs. This divergence of economic interests among the races also meant that their settlements were physically separate. The Malays and the immigrant Indonesians continued growing padi along river and coast. The other immigrants, on the other hand, were drawn to the towns, villages, tin-mines and estates along what later came to be known as the Tin and Rubber Belt of western Malaya, between the coast and the Main Range.

The present level of economic development was not attained without many mistakes and failures caused through lack of understanding of and adaptation to the environmental conditions of the Peninsula. Many thousands of acres of land were destroyed by the 'land-mining' techniques adopted by the early planters in their search for quick profits. The top-soil from further thousands of acres of rubber land was stripped off by erosion because the planters kept the estates clean-weeded in the manner of orchards in Europe. During the earlier and extremely destructive phase of tin-mining, whole countryside were exposed to severe erosion because of the removal of the protective forest cover, while the natural regime of many of the rivers of west central Malaya was permanently disrupted through the uncontrolled discharge of mining effluent into the river beds.