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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

African Democracy and the World Bank

I read with interest Blaine Harden's piece on Kenya [Outlook, Dec 9]. Having worked for 12 years with local organizations in Africa, I know that the people of the continent wish to see democracy flourish there as much as Mr. Harden does.

I'm also sure that Mr. Harden's suggestion that the World Bank and other donors use their leverage to spur democratization would appear, to my African colleagues, to pose a contradiction in terms.

That the World Bank should push political democracy when its own economic programs are formulated not by the people of the Third World but by northern economists and bankers strikes me as a bit uneven. I also am slightly confused by the fact that the World Bank, which has for years ar-

gued that it can only intervene in the economic life of a country and thus cannot, for example, promote such political endeavors as land reform, is suddenly a champion of political change in Africa.

Finally, if I'm not mistaken, the World Bank has for 20 years supported those same "big men of Africa" whom it—with Mr. Harden—now decries.

Democratization in Africa would be a good thing, particularly if the people of Africa are supported in their efforts to control the process of change. As for the bank, it should practice what it preaches.

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