

THE RHODESIAN JOURNAL

of

ECONOMICS

The Quarterly Journal of the Rhodesian Economics Society

Editorial Board:

A. M. Hawkins (Editor), M. S. Brooks, M. L. Rule and P. Staub.

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**The Rhodesia Freedom from Hunger
Campaign**

Col. J. Lombard

Col. Lombard is Campaign Director of
the Rhodesia Freedom From Hunger
Campaign.

THE RHODESIA FREEDOM FROM HUNGER CAMPAIGN¹

COL. JOHN LOMBARD

It was Dr. Sen, of India, Director of the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations, which has its headquarters in Rome, who organised the world-wide organisation known as the "Freedom from Hunger Campaign". A man of vision, he foresaw the problems throughout the world created by the population explosion. Dr. Sen bent his mind to devise ways and means of meeting this situation. He realised that this population explosion is a greater threat than the atom bomb because it is so certain, in spite of anything which can be done within the next 30 years by family planning. He therefore promulgated this idea of a world-wide effort to provide sufficient food for the future populations. He realised that the need will be gigantic and that to supply this need in 30 years' time it is imperative to start making preparations now. Dr. Sen estimated in 1960, that the population of the world was approximately 3,000,000,000 of whom half were actually starving and that by the end of this century the population of the world will have increased to 6,000,000,000 people, of whom the vast majority will be starving unless something is done immediately to prevent it.

Dr. Sen did not propose a gigantic world organisation involving the ordering of food production and food distribution on a world-wide scale. His solution was far more simple and far more practical. Instead, he invited each country in the world to form a Freedom From Hunger Campaign Committee to look after its own interest. He drew attention to the threat of world hunger, to the need to make provision now for a situation which would arise in the next generation. He invited the rich countries of the west to raise funds to assist the under-developed and developing countries, who would need financial assistance, "to preserve world peace and orderly development".

Rhodesia

Rhodesia did not join this Organisation until after the dissolution of the Federation, but in the first month following the dissolution, in January, 1964, the Rhodesia Government applied to the Food and Agricultural Organisation in Rome for permission to join the world-wide Freedom From Hunger Campaign movement and were readily admitted. The Government, through the Minister of Agriculture, thereupon nominated a National Committee for the Rhodesia Freedom From Hunger Campaign, composed of representatives

¹ Paper read to the Society in April 1968.

of voluntary organisations and Government Ministries. That is to say, representatives of the Churches, Women's Organisations, the Men's Organisations, and Youth Organisations, together with representatives of the Ministries of Agriculture, Education, Health, Internal Affairs, Social Welfare and the Information Services. Mr. L. T. Tracey, a well-known farmer and writer on farming subjects, was invited to become the first Chairman. This National Committee held its first meeting in January, 1964, when they decided to form themselves into Sub-Committees which undertook the examination of 42 different possible projects. Of these, the National Committee finally selected three, and applied to the British Freedom From Hunger Campaign Committee for financial assistance. These were:—

- (a) The building of four 36-seater buses, to be used to transport African farmers and their wives, African Women's Clubs, Young Farmers' Clubs and the like, to see the work carried out at Henderson Research Station and research stations and experimental farm projects throughout Rhodesia, thereby giving enhanced value to the work undertaken by the Ministry of Agriculture.
- (b) The provision of 6 Mobile Instruction Units in the form of a Land Rover towing a trailer, equipped with films and film projectors, slide projectors, flannelgraphs and other media of instruction. These mobile instruction units have been manned by the Ministry of Agriculture and have done extensive work in Tribal Trust Lands and Purchase Areas. They have been so eminently successful that the Freedom From Hunger Campaign has been asked to provide two more.
- (c) The provision of two Land Rovers, for the Women's Clubs' instructors/demonstrators. This ambitious programme was eventually carried out at a total cost of £45,000, of which the British Freedom From Hunger Campaign Committee subscribed £20,000. It is of interest to note that this sum was granted and paid, U.D.I. notwithstanding.

Objectives.

- (a) The production of sufficient quantities of the right food to meet the expanding population.
- (b) Malnutrition.

The Production of Food

At the turn of the century, the population of Rhodesia was estimated from tax records to be approximately 300,000 people including the Matabele, Mashona and Europeans. In 1930, according to the census, the population of Rhodesia was shown to be 1,000,000. In the 1962 census, the population

of Rhodesia was shown to be 4,000,000. By 1990, at current growth rates the total population will approximate 8½ million.

Family Planning

We are fortunate in these days to have access to the books on Shona beliefs written by Professor Michael Gelfand. In his book "African Background", he tells us of their belief in a life after death in spirit form and of their continuing family ties as between the living and the dead. The living have responsibilities for the property of their deceased grandparents and for providing beer and sacrifices for them on occasion. If they fail in these duties, they believe that their ancestors will retaliate by causing their children to become sick, which may even lead to death. Conversely, the living must have children and more especially grandchildren, who will care for their spiritual well-being after death. These beliefs are deeply implanted in the minds of all Shona tribesmen and whilst many have embraced the Christian religion, this also supports the belief in a life after death, so the temptation to compromise and ensure the succession of grandchildren must be considerable.

In the experience of all tribesmen, epidemics of measles and influenza frequently wipe out all the children in a family, and so large families are the only known guarantee of succession. *I find that education on nutrition is the best counter to the problem.* At Gatooma last year there was an epidemic of measles, after the introduction of child feeding scheme, when it was made abundantly clear by the mortality rate amongst those children who had not joined in that a regular consumption of protein food built up resistance to disease. Those who had been using the protein food, recovered. As this knowledge is gained, the belief in the need for large families diminishes; at the same time, the advantages of a University education are becoming increasingly apparent. That is when advice on family planning is appreciated, as also when the mother is wearied from giving birth to several children in rapid succession. It is then that nurses and qualified practitioners working with the Freedom From Hunger Campaign take the opportunity to give advice on family planning. These are reasons why, officially, we do not make Family Planning a plank in our platform. Our first need is to gain the confidence and the support of the African menfolk and the older women.

We have, in fact, been given to understand by the Ministry of Health, that since we came into operation, the incidence of malnutrition has been reduced by two-thirds. This means a saving to the country of huge sums in curative medicine; 4,000 cases of Kwashiorkor were admitted to government hospitals and clinics in 1964.

Organisation of the Campaign—June 1964 onwards

Taking the constitution of the National Committee as a lead, I visited the principal centres of Rhodesia, at each of which I arranged with a friend to convene a meeting for me, composed of one representative from each voluntary organisation in the area, together with the Conservation and Extension officer from Agriculture, a headmaster from Education, the government medical officer, the district commissioner, and the social welfare organiser if there was one. If they did not choose to send a representative, that could not be helped. The response to this was splendid and although it has taken some time to build up, we now have what we call "Regional Committees" operating in some 22 main centres and covering almost the whole of Rhodesia.

1964/65 Drought

Coincident with the development of Regional Committees came the drought in southern Matabeleland and the Midlands in 1965. It will be remembered that Government provided relief by voting £3,000,000 for the construction of dams and irrigation works, providing work for the adult population, and asked the R.F.F.H.C. to provide food to the children through the schools. An appeal for funds was launched by Mr. L. T. Tracey, our Chairman, operating through an ad hoc Committee for the "Children of the Drought", and the response by the people of Rhodesia was most generous. Some 40/50,000 head of cattle were lost due to the tribesmen's reluctance to sell when they could have done, but not one man, woman or child died of hunger in that year. Rains in January and February, 1966, enabled the people to grow sorghums and the danger was overcome.

1967/68 Drought

The drought this year in southern Matabeleland is more serious, as there were no late rains, and the Government is taking full responsibility for relief measures.

Action by the R.F.F.H.C., growing protein foods in the Reserves and by the work of the R.F.F.H.C. Child Feeding Schemes will continue, and assistance to Government has been offered and will be available if and when required in special instances.

Action has already been taken to step up efforts to ensure that approved manufactured protein foods are available for sale in the stores throughout the Tribal Trust Lands. This is not the case at present, but by bringing wholesalers and manufacturers together, it is hoped that this can be brought about. The mothers are already aware of the value of these foods through their contact with Women's Clubs, Well Baby Clinics, Mission Hospitals and

Clinics, and lectures from R.F.F.H.C. and Government educational organisations.

If this can be achieved, it will be a great step forward, not only in alleviating the present situation, but in the nutrition content of the daily meals of the Africans throughout the country.

The Work of the Regional Committees

Our method of operation is as follows. It is pointed out to each Regional Committee, when formed, that they are the people who know best what are the problems in their own area and which organisations are best able to tackle them; that they will be assisted where possible with finance from the National Committee.

(a) The Well Baby Clinics

The Gwelo Regional Committee started the idea of Well Baby Clinics. The procedure is for the Ministry of Health to enlist the services of a retired State Registered Nurse, to pay her 1/-d. a mile for the use of her private transport, and to arrange for her to conduct clinics at convenient points such as Government Clinics, schoolrooms, or any convenient meeting place where African mothers can come with their infants. They are called Well Baby Clinics to emphasise that the mothers should come with their babies as soon as they are born and not wait for them to fall sick. If one child is below normal weight, or fails to put on weight as it should, powdered milk or, in the case of twins, Lactogen or some other such protein additive food powder, is provided for the child by the Freedom From Hunger Campaign, for which the mother is asked to pay what she can. The obviously destitute do not have to pay. The guiding rule is that 50% of the cost of the total amount distributed must be refunded to the Freedom From Hunger Campaign when ordering the next consignment. At first we insisted on 20%, but as the Campaign progressed, Regional Committees found, and suggested themselves, that they should refund 50%. These Well Baby Clinics, begun by the Gwelo Regional Committee, have been taken up by one Regional Committee after another, to the extent that today they are operating in every Province throughout Rhodesia.

(b) Mission Hospitals and Clinics

Another feeding scheme inaugurated by the Freedom From Hunger Campaign is directed at pre-school age children and operates through the Mission hospitals and Mission clinics, where again the Freedom From Hunger Campaign provides powdered milk and other protein additive foods on a subsidised basis.

(c) Council Schools

Councils are encouraged to introduce a light meal for children on arrival at school, by the offer of a loan to add a storeroom and kitchen to the school building, the loan to become a grant if the scheme continues for two years. During the past twelve months, 40 tons of these protein additive food powders have been supplied on a repayment basis to Well Baby Clinics, Mission Hospitals and Clinics and Council Schools. The schemes continue to operate and are expanding rapidly.

(d) Protein Food Production

Other projects adopted by Regional Committees have been directed towards the encouragement of Africans to provide themselves with protein food by better animal husbandry and in this regard some quite remarkable successes have been achieved in recent months by the Ministry of Agriculture.

(e) Feeding old stock for Slaughter

The CONEX officers in Victoria demonstrated the value of feeding old oxen and cows for 100 days and selling them to the Cold Storage Commission. This began in a small way when two Africans were encouraged to do it. Others followed suit and in less than two years the practice has been adopted by numerous Africans in every province throughout Rhodesia.

(f) Better feeding of Calves

A similar demonstration introduced by the CONEX officers at Victoria concerned the better feeding of young calves, which traditionally are separated from the mothers from 6 p.m. to 11 a.m. daily and are then expected to get their food by sucking from the mother while out grazing. Now, the African is taught to allow the calf to run with the mother for six weeks and then to separate it completely from its mother and to feed it on small but sufficient quantities of mealie meal and groundnut meal; thereby making the mother's milk available to the family. I do not know to what extent this has been adopted by the African people in general, but we hope it will become universal.

(g) Improved Pastures

Improved grasses of several kinds have been grown successfully at Henderson Research Station. A quite revolutionary discovery is a grass which grows in vleis and we are now encouraged to plough and fertilise and plant it in vleis. When this practice becomes general we shall be able to run several head on one acre instead of one beast to 10 acres as at present. The possibilities in the next generation of cattle ranchers are fabulous.

(h) **Small Stock**

Projects designed to help Africans to provide themselves with poultry and rabbits for food, have been undertaken successfully by a number of Regional Committees. The use of the European type of rabbit was unknown to the African people generally, but has taken on rapidly and is progressing in many parts of the country.

(i) **Food Storage**

It has been mentioned that our primary objective is to forestall world-wide famine in thirty years, when the world population can be expected to have doubled. So far, I have described projects to encourage the African to produce his own food by new and improved methods of farming. But the avoidance of wastage can be even more dramatic. The F.F.H.C. report the loss of 150,000,000 tons of grain a year through rats and weevils in South America. In India, 3,000,000 people die in normal years from hunger; and yet enough food to feed 30,000,000 people is lost every year in India through the same cause.

Here in Rhodesia, the average tribesman reaps 15 bags of maize and loses 3 of them to rats and weevils through bad storage. This is a conservative estimate, but the loss of 3 bags of grain by each of 500,000 tribesmen amounts to 1,500,000 bags a year.

The Gwelo Regional Committee have now started a project to experiment in methods of avoiding these losses. They are building a large storage building and propose to buy grain from the African farmers when it is reaped at ruling prices and sell it back to them at the same price plus 5/-d. storage cost at a later date. They are also experimenting in various receptacles and insecticides which the tribesmen can use in their own villages. Once again, they may run into obstacles posed by African custom. Grain reaped from the husband's fields is for the use of all the family. But grain grown by his first wife in her land is her property only, and the husband has no claim of right to it whatever. And what of the grain grown by the second and subsequent wives?

(j) **The Newsletter**

A Newsletter is produced and published every two months which carries on the front page a Message from the Chairman, which gives a general direction to our Regional Committees and our readers. The remainder of the production is devoted to articles designed to promote a better knowledge of the problems of nutrition and ways of combating malnutrition; new methods of agriculture and animal husbandry; current plans of Regional Committees and of the Campaign.

Ten thousand copies are printed of each issue and distributed to the opinion formers amongst the African people; to Provincial Commissioners and District Commissioners, Chiefs and Headmen; to Schools Community Advisers, Health Assistants, Conservation Extension Assistants, Young Farmers' Clubs, Women's Clubs.

Conclusion

This is just a brief survey of the organisation, work and development of the Freedom From Hunger Campaign in Rhodesia since it started in January, 1964.

I have the feeling that we are on the brink of big developments as the African masses assimilate our message. They are already showing signs of doing so.

But in the meantime we have the satisfaction of an assurance from the Ministry of Health that the incidence of malnutrition has already been reduced by two-thirds in the past four years.



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