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The Role of Food
in
Post-War Reconstruction

by

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The importance of higher standards of nutrition as an essential element in the achievement of "freedom from want" has recently been underlined by President Roosevelt's announcement that he is considering the convocation of a United Nations Conference on post-war food production. The International Labour Office has been devoting attention for some time to the necessity, when framing economic policies with a view to the attainment of social objectives, of making adequate provision for better nutrition. The Review welcomes the opportunity of publishing the following article by Sir John Orr, an acknowledged authority on nutrition questions, who suggests that a food plan would be a useful starting point for the work of post-war reconstruction, explains the urgency of beginning to plan now, and describes the kind of machinery, national and international, that might be used for applying a world food policy.

WHEN the fighting forces of the Axis Powers have been completely defeated, the United Nations will be in control of the whole world. It will be a shattered world. In some countries the political, economic, and social structures will be almost completely destroyed. Even in the countries least affected by the war, they will be badly damaged. It is obvious that the world will need to be rebuilt. This affords an opportunity such as humanity has never had before of building a world in which the great advances of modern science can be applied to the development of an organisation of human society which will be not only free from war, but such that mankind can rise to a level of well-being and culture higher than that dreamed of by social reformers of past ages.

The opportunity will be there, but the immensity of the opportunity is equalled by the immensity of the task. The task

ment which has subscribed to the Atlantic Charter, with the promise to bring freedom from want to all men, could refuse to cooperate in a plan to supply food on a health standard to all people.

Simplicity and Practicability of a Food Plan

There would be no difficulty in getting people to understand what was meant by a food plan based on human needs. It could be stated in terms of the amounts of milk, butter, fruit, eggs, meat, and other common foods needed for families of different sizes, as indeed has been done by the Canadian Medical Association for Canadian families.¹ They would understand that it meant bringing their standard of living, so far as food is concerned, up to the level of the adequately fed middle classes. The difficulty would be to persuade them that their Governments really meant to carry out such a revolutionary plan.

The plan is practicable. The advance of science has enormously increased our power to produce food. In Britain, even under war conditions, food production has been increased from about 34 to nearly 60 per cent. of the total national consumption. The increase in production for Canada since the beginning of the war is even greater than in Britain in the case of some of the more important foods. The food the people need can be produced if Governments show anything like the same resolution and energy in providing for the primary needs of the people in peace as they have shown in providing food and armaments in war.

Development of a Food Plan from Wartime Food Measures

War has forced Governments to apply a plan now to the extent that food is available. In war, the fighting men must be given a diet which will maintain them in the highest possible state of health and physical fitness. Mmunition workers must be given food which will maintain health and working efficiency. Governments must therefore take measures to ensure that sufficient food is provided and that it is distributed according to needs. Britain has done this in a thorough manner which reflects the highest credit on the Ministry of Food and the Ministry of Agriculture. Estimates were made of the nutritional requirements of the whole nation. Consideration was given to the kind of food which could most nearly meet these requirements, and which could be produced with the minimum man-hours of labour and the minimum cubic feet of shipping space. Then the available food was distributed in accordance with physiological needs, special measures being devised to ensure that

¹ CANADIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION: *Food for Health in Peace and War. What Canadian Doctors Suggest for Wholesome Meals at Low Cost* (Toronto, 1940).

the higher needs of mothers and children for the protective foods would be met. There is not sufficient food in the national larder to bring the diet of the people up to the standard for full health, but since poverty no longer prevents any family from getting its just share of the food available, the poorest part of the population is better fed from the point of view of health than it was before the war.¹

The food plan based on human needs is developing into a United Nations plan. The United States and Canada have adjusted their food production programmes not merely to feed their own people; production is being rapidly stepped up to meet the needs of Britain and in anticipation of supplying the needs of European countries as soon as they are freed. This increased food production is not to meet trade interests, although, indeed, trade may benefit. The aim is to produce what the people of the United States and Canada and the people of Britain and the European countries need. This is a complete reversal of the food policy of the 1930's, which limited supply to economic demand, and even destroyed whatever could not be sold at a profit, with little regard for the fact that many people were suffering in health for lack of the foods which were being destroyed.

Under the stress of war, therefore, we have gone a long way towards a policy of adjusting the production and distribution of food to meet the nutritional needs of the people. And, indeed, the United States and Britain are preparing to extend this policy to post-war relief in Europe. This will include assistance to agriculture, and will thus afford an opportunity of directing European agriculture along lines which will benefit the health of the people of Europe and, at the same time, make that agriculture fit in better with a world food production scheme.

Pre-war European agriculture was to a large extent adapted for national self-sufficiency as a safeguard against food shortage in war. But, if the European countries adopt a food policy based on the nutritional needs of their peoples on the health standard, agriculture will need to be adjusted to a greatly increased production of milk and other protective foods, with a resulting decreased production of certain other foods, especially wheat and sugar, which in any case are uneconomical crops for western Europe from the point of view of world trade. If decisions are not taken now, and long-range plans worked out, post-war food relief will set Europe back again on to an agricultural war policy instead of on to an agricultural nutrition policy. We shall find ourselves back again in 1938.

¹ For a more detailed account of the British measures, cf. INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE, Studies and Reports, Series B (Economic Conditions) No. 35: *Food Control in Great Britain* (Montreal, 1942. vi + 272 pp.).

As will be shown later, there is a large gap between the supply of many foods, such as milk, dairy products, fruit, vegetables, eggs and meat, and the amount needed if the whole world population is to be put on a health standard. A world food plan based on nutritional needs, therefore, would provide a market for many years ahead for all the increased production which wartime food measures are bringing about. It would thus prevent a post-war agricultural slump such as occurred after the war of 1914-1918.

The war food policy, post-war food relief, and a long-range permanent world policy could thus dovetail into each other.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF A FOOD POLICY

Let us consider what effect a food nutrition policy would have on the promotion of human welfare, which should be the end and aim of all planning, and also what effect it would have upon agriculture, industry, and trade.

Effects on Health

Health is the foundation of well-being, and an adequate diet is the foundation of health. Investigations in various countries have shown that below a certain income level, as income per head of the family falls, the diet becomes more and more deficient in vitamins, minerals, and proteins because, unfortunately, the foods rich in these are relatively expensive. As the diet becomes worse, health and physique become worse. Poor diet is accompanied by bad housing and psychological factors which affect health. But the results of experiments indicate that food is the most important health factor.

In Britain, among the people who are worst fed, the mortality rate is 30 per 1,000. Among the people who are adequately fed and housed, the rate is 9 per 1,000. The infant mortality rate is over 100 per 1,000 among the former, compared with about 20 among the latter. Some diseases, such as tuberculosis, are two or three times as prevalent. Stature is three or four inches shorter and physique is worse. Physical disabilities, such as defective sight and hearing, and premature senility are more prevalent. The proportion of children who are mentally defective or backward is much higher. Lack of adequate food is correlated with disease, physical disability, and premature death.

We know that the difference in physical well-being is not due to an inherited difference. When we improve the environmental conditions of these people, health improves. Numerous tests have shown that when children from families whose diet is inadequate are given the same diet as children of well-to-do families, some

diseases disappear, the children become obviously healthier, and begin to grow at the same rate as the children of the well-to-do.

One of the most striking demonstrations of the effect of improvement of diet was that which took place in Britain between the war of 1914-1918 and the present war. Owing to various causes, not the least of which were the excellent social and public health measures designed to improve the diet of the poorest, the consumption of the protective foods rose by roughly 50 per cent. Accompanying this improvement in the national diet, there was a corresponding improvement in national health. The average infant mortality rate of all classes in England and Wales fell from over 100 to 52 per 1,000. Tuberculosis decreased by about 50 per cent., the grosser forms of deficiency diseases such as rickets and scurvy which thirty years ago affected more than 50 per cent. of the children in poor families in industrial towns, were almost completely eliminated, and children leaving school in 1938 were between two and three inches taller than their parents at the same age. Other factors doubtless contributed to this result, but the big factor was the improvement in the national diet.¹

Mr. Churchill has made the noble promise of a better post-war world with a fuller life—the just and true inheritance of the common man. Biologists could make a rough estimate of the additional man-years of life which would be added to the common people of the world if even food only were made available on a health standard. We should save more man-years of life in one decade than have been lost in all the wars of the last hundred years. If it is quality rather than quantity of life he had in mind, an idea of the extent to which quality could be improved can be got by comparing the physique, health, and happiness of families who are well-fed and free from even the fear of want with those of the families of the unemployed.

Alleviation of Poverty

The chief cause of malnutrition is poverty. No better proof of this could be given than the result of Mr. Seebohm Rowntree's social investigations in England made in 1937.² After an exhaustive enquiry, he tried to ascertain the lowest wage on which a family with three children could be supported. Let us look at the kind of diet in his proposed family budget. To make it as cheap as possible, he cut out butter and whole milk and substituted mar-

¹ Cf. Hugh CLEGG: *Wartime Health and Democracy* (London, J.M. Dent & Sons, 1941); also, Sir John Boyd ORR: *Food, Health and Income* (London, Macmillan & Co., 1937), and *Fighting for What?* (London, Macmillan & Co., 1942).

² B. Seebohm ROWNTREE: *The Human Needs of Labour* (London, Longmans, Green and Company, 1937).

garine and canned separated milk, and he assumed that it would be cheaper if the bread was baked at home. He did not enquire how many houses in the slums would have facilities for baking bread. Take the menu for Monday, the first working day of the week:

Breakfast: Porridge and skimmed milk, bacon, bread and margarine (or fried bread), tea;

Dinner: Beef roll, mashed potatoes and salad, steamed date pudding;

Tea: Tea, bread and margarine, watercress;

Supper: Lentil soup (remains) and bread.

That is not a diet on which we can rear a healthy race. It falls far below what we now know to be necessary for health. Imagine a dock labourer, or a miner, after a hard day's physical work, coming home to a meal of tea, bread, margarine and watercress and, for his supper, bread and lentil soup, if there was any left over from Sunday's supper. Yet, Mr. Rowntree was forced to the conclusion that there are millions of our fellow-countrymen who are so poor that they cannot afford as good a diet as that. These millions comprise a high proportion—nearly one-half—of the country's children. He estimates that, even if the minimum income were brought up to that level, about one-third of the children in Great Britain—those belonging to families with more than three dependent children—would “during five or more of their most critical years be insufficiently provided for even according to the spartan standard set forth in this book”.

It should be noticed that this low standard of living, from which one-third of the children would still be excluded for five years of their lives, was not a picture of actual conditions. This is the *higher* standard which Mr. Rowntree suggested we should try to reach within five years.

Poverty causes malnutrition. It would be equally true to say that the high cost of a diet adequate for health is one of the causes of poverty. The lower the family income per head, the higher is the proportion of the total income spent on food. Among the very wealthy, the amount spent on the common foods needed for health is not more than 1 or 2 per cent. of the total income. Among the working class in Britain, it runs to between 40 and 50 per cent. Among the very poor it may rise to as high as 70 per cent. If a diet adequate for health were made available within the purchasing power of the poorest, there would be a rise in the standard of living, so far as food is concerned, *i.e.*, a rise to the extent of over 50 per cent. of their total expenditure. The food sector of the home front would rise to the level of the lower middle class. Malnutrition, the worst physical evil of poverty, would be abolished, and poverty itself would be greatly diminished.

There is no measure which would do more for the promotion

of human welfare than bringing a diet adequate for health within the reach of every family. If to this we could add a home in which families could live in health and in decency, we should have a foundation on which we could build a better civilisation—a civilisation which would have a chance of being stable. We talk about building a new and better world. If we are in earnest, we will build from the bottom upwards. We will begin by supplying the primary necessities of life to those who have never enjoyed them.

Effects on Agriculture

If food needs on a health standard are to be met, there will be a great expansion of agriculture. It will be convenient to use the United States as an illustration. It is estimated that in the United States 40 million more acres of food and feedingstuff crops would need to be grown. The following table shows the increases of agricultural products needed¹:

CROP ACREAGE AND LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION REQUIRED FOR IMPROVED CONSUMPTION IN THE UNITED STATES

Commodity	Actual acreage for domestic use 1936-1940	Required acreage ¹ for "best adapted diet"	
	Thousand acres	Thousand acres	Percentage increase on actual figure
Truck crops	4,144	7,257	75
Hay	69,469	90,258	30
Fruits	4,269	5,083	19
Beans, peas, nuts	4,484	5,203	16
Potatoes	3,949	4,477	13
Sugar, sirup	1,510	1,659	10
Feed grains	148,252	161,781	9
Food grains	62,463	63,359	1
Miscellaneous crops	12,781	12,085	—
Total crop acreage	311,321	351,162	13
	Actual number of livestock for domestic use 1936-1940	Required number of livestock for "best adapted diet"	
	Millions	Millions	Percentage increase on actual figure
Milk cows	23.9	33.3	39
Hens (for eggs)	369.0	452.9	23
Meat animals slaughtered:			
Sheep and lambs	21.9	25.5	16
Hogs	60.5	69.3	15
Chickens	644.0	699.5	9
Beef cattle	15.2	16.2	7
Veal calves	9.6	10.1	5

¹ Normal yields assumed; acreages listed make no provision for exports.

¹ U.S. BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS: *Estimates of Quantities of Food Necessary to Provide Certain Specified Diets and Crop Acreages and Numbers of Livestock Required for Indicated Production*. Statement prepared by O.V. WELLS and submitted to the Select Committee Investigating Defense Migration, House of Representatives, 13 Feb. 1942.

In Britain a somewhat similar increase in the protective foods would be needed. The increase in milk production would be greater. To bring liquid milk consumption up to the level recommended by the Advisory Committee on Nutrition and approved by the Government in 1935¹, production would need to be nearly doubled. This would necessitate a reorientation of agriculture towards the production of foods which can be produced at home as economically as they can be imported. Britain is well adapted for the production of milk, vegetables, and some fruit, and there is no reason why eggs and bacon could not be produced as economically in Britain as in Denmark, the Netherlands or the Baltic countries. Fortunately, these products give a big output in money value and require a large amount of labour per acre, a point of social importance in a small, densely populated country.

The additional amounts of these protective foods needed are so large that some of the land at present producing wheat, beef, and sugarbeet, which can all be imported more cheaply than they can be produced, would need to be devoted to dairying, vegetable and fruit growing, and pig and poultry raising. British agriculture would become more like that of Denmark and the Netherlands, where agriculture was prosperous before the war. British imports of wheat, beef, mutton, and sugar would need to be increased to make up for the fall in home production. The increase in the consumption of liquid milk would leave little milk for making butter and cheese, and imports of these would need to be increased to make good the fall in home production and to raise the total supply to the higher level of consumption required for a health basis. If the additional requirements for fruit are found to be of the same order as those for the United States, namely 70 per cent., increased imports would need to be added to increased home production to provide the necessary amounts. The larger dairy cow, pig, and poultry populations would need not only an extension of home-grown fodder crops, but also an increase in the amount of concentrates for feedingstuffs, the imports of which in pre-war days amounted to about 8½ million tons per annum. An agricultural nutrition policy thus calls for both increased production and increased imports.

A similar reorientation would be called for in most other European countries. Increased production of the protective foods would be accompanied by increased imports of wheat, sugar, beef, and concentrated feedingstuff such as maize and oil seeds. The extent of the increase in protective foods and of the reorientation of an

¹ MINISTRY OF HEALTH, ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON NUTRITION: *First Report* (London, H.M. Stationery Office, 1937).

agricultural nutrition policy for Asiatic countries would be so great that one hesitates even to consider the problem at this stage. Still, the promise of the Atlantic Charter is "for all the men in all the lands". A diet adequate for health must be made available to the people of these lands if this promise is to be fulfilled. There will obviously be a market for all the food which all countries can produce for many years ahead.

But the workers who produce the food deserve as high a standard of living as the workers in industry who consume it, and capital invested in agriculture deserves the same return as capital invested in urban industries. The poverty of the peasant and land worker has for long been a social injustice, and the low purchasing power of the primary producer a weakness of the economic system. An agricultural nutrition policy must provide not only a guaranteed market, it must also provide a guaranteed price at a level which will provide reasonable remuneration to the land worker. Indeed, that is the lowest price which will call forth the great volume of additional food needed.

A world food policy undertaken on humanitarian grounds would thus inevitably bring about an expanded and prosperous agriculture.

Effects on Industry

The great majority of farms would need to be reconditioned to enable them to produce at the higher level. A vast quantity of new equipment would be called for. Dairy farms need better water supplies. Electrification schemes for power and domestic use must be provided. The majority of farmsteads in most countries are in disrepair and obsolete in design. Then, if the land workers are to have a standard of living on the same level as workers of equal skill in towns, they must have new houses with sanitary conveniences and adequate furniture.

In the more backward countries, industries will be needed to enable agriculture to function efficiently. In India and China some of the people must be taken off the land for new industries to provide for the needs of agriculture. This will enable the size of the farming units to be larger and, therefore, more efficient. In the Jewish settlement in Palestine, agriculture has been raised to such a high level of efficiency that although the settlement only occupies 7 per cent. of the total land, it is claimed that it produces about 50 per cent. of the total agricultural output. To enable it to reach this high level of efficiency, however, there are three workers in other industries for one in agriculture.

In some countries, such as China, one of the first things necessary

to enable the people to be assured of a regular supply of food is improved methods of transport. Starvation has occurred because, though there was food in the country to relieve the famine, it could not be transported to the famine area. The development of these countries calls for a huge output of industrial products not only for land cultivation, but also for railways, roads, and electrification systems.

If the United Nations set out to produce the food the people of the world need, there will be a new era of industrial prosperity. At the end of the war we may not literally beat our swords into ploughshares, but we shall convert tanks and guns into tractors, cultivators, milking machines, and all the other equipment needed for a world-wide, efficient agriculture. Instead of the stagnation of the 1930's, with town workers who could make the implements farmers need deteriorating physically and spiritually in unemployment, and, at the same time, the land which could produce the food the ill-fed families of the unemployed need lying idle, both town and country workers would be fully employed, creating the new wealth that would lift them both out of poverty, with a resulting expansion of world trade.

ORGANISATION FOR A WORLD FOOD POLICY

Each nation would have to set up an organisation for its own national needs, and, in addition, an international organisation would have to be set up to enable the nations to co-operate with each other in regulating food production and to develop their industries and trade on a world basis for their mutual advantage.

National Organisations

The kind of organisation would vary in different countries according to their existing political and economic structure. It should evolve from the war food organisations so that there would be no sudden break at the end of the war, and it would be desirable to make the fullest use of existing organisations and channels of trade so that the end may be achieved with the minimum disturbance of business.

The following outline¹ is given as an illustration of the kind of organisation which might be devised for Britain. It utilises the agricultural marketing boards created before the war. It could be run on business lines without any bureaucratic interference, and in all its activities, except the central control, be subject to the stimulating effect of competition. Both producers and distributors could be free to run their businesses and make a success of

¹ Taken from the author's *Fighting for What?*, *op. cit.*, pp. 49 *et seq.*

them, and equally free to go bankrupt and be squeezed out by more successful competitors.

The proposal is that there should be a National Food Board, operating through a number of Commodity Boards, for example, for: milk and dairy products; beef and mutton; eggs and poultry; bacon and pork; fruit and vegetables; fish; cereals and feedingstuffs.

The National Food Board should be appointed by the Government after a free discussion in Parliament on the suitability of the men for the posts. The appointment should be made for a period of years so that the Board would not change with any change in Government. The members of the Board should be men financially independent of the food trade. The Commodity Boards might also consist either of independent men or of representatives of all interests, namely, producers, distributors, consumers, and taxpayers.

The National Board should be responsible for bringing the national supplies of the main foodstuffs up to the level needed to provide sufficient for everybody, and for arranging that sufficient would be available within the purchasing power of everybody. The Board should be voted the necessary funds to carry out these functions, and the annual report of the Board would be discussed in Parliament at the time when the funds were voted.

It is recognised that there would be difficulty in estimating exactly the amount of money needed to enable the Board to get the necessary supplies and also to fix wholesale prices such that an adequate diet would fall within the purchasing power of every family. Data on which an estimate could be made are available in Government departments and from various social surveys. The amount would, of course, vary with the cost of other essentials, such as rent, and with changes in family income; for example, children's allowances would greatly simplify the problem and would decrease the amount needed. This need not be discussed further in this article, which deals more with policy than with method.

The National Board would exercise its functions through the Commodity Boards. It would have complete executive powers and should appoint its own officials. The Commodity Boards would control and ultimately own the key-points of food distribution, that is, the processing centres, such as slaughterhouses, milk depots, and fruit and vegetable canning factories. Each of these processing centres would have storehouses attached to it in which processed food could be kept for a time without deterioration. The Boards would obtain their supplies from the home producer or from the importer. They would be the main wholesalers for the foods they handle.

The Commodity Boards would offer the producer a guaranteed

market and also a guaranteed price calculated to call forth the total amount needed. They would in turn sell to the trade at a wholesale price calculated to be such that the retailer, giving the minimum distributive service, for example, selling on the cash-and-carry basis, would be able to offer the foodstuffs at a price within the reach of the poorest. Each Commodity Board would be provided with funds to bridge the gulf between what it needs to pay the producer and what it gets from the traders. The amount given to each Board would be decided by the National Board.

Each Commodity Board would thus have a reservoir of money and, at its processing centres, a reservoir of foodstuffs. The rigid connection between the price paid to the producer and the selling price to the trade would be broken at the reservoir. The Board would therefore be able to maintain prices to the consumer at a constant level all the year round, even though it had to pay the producer a higher price in some seasons than in others.

The reserve stocks of food at the reservoirs would accumulate in some seasons and be depleted in others, so that a regular supply for the public would be maintained in spite of the seasonal fluctuations in food production. Eggs and milk, for example, would be maintained at the same price throughout the year instead of being dearer in winter, when the need for them is greater.

With the knowledge we now have of the preservation of food, there would be no difficulty in keeping the surplus food of a season for use in a later season. Practically all foodstuffs can be preserved. Fish can be preserved for months and appear on the table as fresh as if newly caught and immediately distributed. The food reservoirs of these Boards would enable food such as fruit and vegetables, which is at present lost in a season of glut, to be preserved and made available for winter use.

The Boards would not need powers of compulsion over the producer. The offer of a remunerative price would be sufficient to call forth the amounts needed. If too much were sold to the Board, the latter would, in the following years, have to reduce the price offered until it reached the level which called forth no more than the amount needed. In this way, the inefficient producer would ultimately be eliminated.

Farmers would know the guaranteed price offered for each of the commodities, and would know that any change would be gradual and that notice would be given some considerable time ahead. They would therefore be able to decide what type of agriculture was most suited to their farms and to arrange for a long-term organisation of production, instead of, as in pre-war days, chopping and changing in an attempt to catch fluctuating market prices.

There is no need for the Boards to have a monopoly. If a farmer could find a special direct market for his product without passing it through the Board, there is no reason why he should not do so provided the food he produces and sells is up to the standard for health demanded by the Board. Any farmer who could produce and market his product without the assistance of the Board would be a public benefactor not only in saving the funds of the Board but also by competing to maintain a high level of efficiency on the part of the Boards.

In the same way, there would be no need for a uniform retail price, with all the inspection and prosecutions needed to maintain uniformity. The service of distribution varies and the cost of it should vary. So long as the poorest people have the food they need with the cheapest service, there is no reason why retailers should not get as much as they can from the wealthier part of the community wishing an expensive service and willing to pay for it.

The Boards would sell the food at the same price to multiple shops, co-operative societies, and small retailers, and these different methods of distribution could be left to compete with each other; the method which gave the best public service would survive.

There would be no taint of pauperism in this scheme. The wealthiest person could, if he liked, buy the food at the same price as the poorest, and there is no reason why he should not be allowed to do so, because people would be paying for the national food service in proportion to their income. There would be no need, therefore, for any means test.

The setting up of an organisation on these lines would not involve any very drastic change in the food trades. The existing Agricultural Marketing Boards, which deal with some of the food-stuffs, would be taken over as going concerns to form the corresponding Commodity Boards, but, instead of being producers' boards with a monopoly and the power to regulate production and fix prices in their own interest, they would be responsible through the National Board to the whole community—producers, distributors, consumers, and taxpayers.

The above suggestions about the nature of the organisation needed to carry through a food policy based on human needs are not to be taken as a detailed scheme. The outline is given merely to illustrate the fact that an organisation could be built up which would meet the needs of the people and, at the same time, leave full initiative and free business enterprise to both producers and distributors and free choice of food to the people without any inquisition on family income.

International Organisations

Nations could co-operate in setting up international agricultural and food commissions which, while having no power to interfere with national food organisations, could give information and guidance on the best method of ensuring that the national larders would have sufficient for the needs of the people. They could facilitate international trade in food and in the things needed for food production, and could arrange for the necessary long-term credits which would be needed for the first few years to enable the poorer countries to bring the diet of their people up to the health standard.

These international organisations would be necessary to carry out a world food policy which would move towards and fit in with the international schemes for economic and political organisation that are doubtless being prepared.

It is of interest to note that the food policy suggested here is, in its essential features, the same as that which was beginning to be developed by the League of Nations in 1935.¹ Between that date and the outbreak of war twenty-two Governments had set up nutrition committees to consider the food position in their countries, and representatives of these committees had met at Geneva to consider the whole position in its health, agricultural, and economic aspects. Had war not broken out, the probability is that the twenty-two nations would have evolved a definite scheme of co-operation, which would ultimately have included all nations.

NEED FOR PLANNING NOW

If the United Nations are going to adopt a world food policy based on human needs, they should begin to make definite plans now. All of the available information, and there is a great mass of data waiting to be correlated, should be brought together:

(a) To give a broad picture of the state of nutrition and of agriculture in each country before the war;

(b) To show the change that has taken place in each country during the war so far as information can be obtained. This picture should be kept up to date so that at the end of the war we may know the starting-point for the long-range policy;

(c) To make estimates of the extent to which food production and imports would need to be increased to fill the national larders on a health standard.

Having got the information together, there remains the very

¹ LEAGUE OF NATIONS MIXED COMMITTEE ON THE PROBLEM OF NUTRITION: *Final Report on the Relation of Nutrition to Health, Agriculture and Economic Policy* (Geneva, Series of League of Nations Publications, 1937, II. A. 10); see also INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE, *Studies and Reports, Series B (Social and Economic Conditions) No. 23: Workers' Nutrition and Social Policy* (Geneva, 1936).

difficult task of planning how the larders are to be filled and what changes these will bring about in agriculture and international trade in foods, and what effect the policy would have on industry and finance. We have then to consider the kind of organisations needed to carry the policy to completion.

This involves months of work. Further, the policy will succeed only if we have a well-informed public opinion. There would be need to make the general idea of the food policy current among all classes of society in all nations.

Work along these lines is being done by groups in different countries. All of the information should be considered by an international group, including representatives not only of Britain and America, but also of Russia and China, and all of the United Nations should be kept informed of the progress being made.¹

CONCLUSION

The difficulties of post-war reconstruction are appalling. The problem is not one of repairing the physical damage. That can be done quickly. The fundamental difficulty lies in the fact that we dare not reconstruct on the old model. The old model broke down in a world war, twice in one generation. This second world war has destroyed the political and economic system on the continent of Europe and threatens the complete destruction of democracy and the extinction of liberty throughout the whole world. Reconstruction of the old model would inevitably bring about another breakdown. We must adjust our political and economic structures to suit the new age which the rapid advance of science is thrusting us into before we are ready to deal with it. Economic theories derived from our experience of the past cannot be applied in their entirety to this new age, because we are faced with new physical powers which science is creating; new economic forces we cannot measure; and new spiritual forces which even the wisest can only dimly perceive.

Faced with a problem which no one can read, the only wise course is to go forward one step at a time, doing first the thing we are sure is right. The first step is obviously to maintain the unity of the nations as a supreme world authority to prevent another war. If there is another war, it will probably be a war to preserve the union.

¹ For an example of an international study, see INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE: *Food Consumption and Dietary Surveys in the Americas. Results—Methods*, by Robert Morse WOODBURY (Montreal, 1942), to which reference is made by Sir Joseph BARCROFT in a letter to *The Times* (9 Dec. 1942) as proof that the world is not "without machinery both for the assessment of want and for that of available supplies. . . Here anyone . . . will see one organisation which covers a great part of the world."

The next task of the United Nations is to provide food and shelter, the prime necessities, on a health standard. Housing, and all the other things which the word "shelter" denotes, varies so much from country to country that it is mainly a national problem. Food, on the other hand, is an international problem which can only be solved by the co-operation of the nations.

I have tried to show that if we put first things first, and begin with this first essential duty, other benefits will follow. A food policy can be the spearhead of a government for agricultural and economic prosperity. It can be used as a self-starter to set the whole system moving, and moving this time in the right direction along a road that will lead to a great expansion of agriculture, industry, and trade which will be stable and permanent because it will be based on the sure foundation of human welfare.
