

# THE McDOUGALL MEMORANDA







*Mr. McDougall presenting Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt with a copy of Gove Hambidge's book "The Story of FAO", in which the history of the Organization and McDougall's contribution to it are well described. At this occasion, March 1955, McDougall reminded Mrs. Roosevelt of the part she had played by becoming actively interested in his memorandum of 1942 and how that interest had led to a meeting with Franklin D. Roosevelt and later to the calling of the Hot Springs Conference.*

# THE McDUGALL MEMORANDA

*Some Documents Relating to the Origins of FAO  
and the Contribution Made by Frank L. McDougall*



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS - ROME - 1956

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*The great depression and the failure to come to grips with basic economic problems at an international level in the early thirties made a number of people keenly aware of the need for fresh thinking and bold action.*

*The London World Monetary and Economic Conference (1933), convened in an atmosphere of great expectations, had not succeeded in formulating any proposals materially differing from the current policies, e.g. the policy of restriction in the face of surpluses, falling world prices and wide-spread unemployment. The frustration and disappointment at the outcome of the London Conference was widely felt and was forcibly expressed by the Australian delegation, headed by Stanley Bruce, then High Commissioner for Australia in London, whose adviser was Frank McDougall.*

*Together with a few others, among whom was John Boyd Orr, they concluded that a fresh approach was essential.*

*They found a powerful ally in the new science of nutrition, which had made rapid strides since the First World War. Dr. Hazel Stiebling and her collaborators had calculated the amounts of food needed to raise the consumption of under-privileged groups in the United States to a more satisfactory level. Dr. John Boyd Orr was working on his book "Food, Health and Income" (published in 1936); in 1935 the Health Section of the League of Nations prepared a report on "Nutrition and Health" (the Burnet-Aykroyd report) and the Technical Commission on Nutrition issued a pioneer work on dietary requirements for health called "The Physiological Bases of Nutrition" in early 1936. The general effect of these was to show that a large proportion of the world's population did not get enough of the right sort of food to eat and that hence food production should be expanded rather than restricted to meet nutritional requirements.*

*The practical importance of the modern science of nutrition had been demonstrated and new ways opened up for economic policy.*

*As a first step to bringing this new approach to the knowledge of an international forum McDougall prepared a brief on "The Agricultural and Health Problems" summing up his own thinking and that of his associates. The inter-relationships of agriculture, financial stability and health were clearly shown and practical, constructive solutions to the surplus problems of that time were outlined. This document has often been referred to in the last twenty years; few people have read it. One might say that it has become part of the folklore of FAO. It is now being reproduced for the first time.*

## THE AGRICULTURAL AND THE HEALTH PROBLEMS

- 1        Although the diagnosticians of the continuance of the depression vary in the emphasis they place upon the causes retarding world recovery, there would be general agreement to-day that the problems facing world agriculture are major factors. Indeed at both Geneva and Washington there is a tendency to place the difficulties of the agricultural countries in the foreground of the picture.

      Since questions affecting trade in agricultural products are now of vital significance in national, interimperial and international trade, it is essential to examine the problems from every angle.

- 2        To-day almost every country, with the exception of Russia and probably most of Asia, is familiar with the situation of supplies in excess of available demand. There are a number of reasons to anticipate a continuance of this state of affairs. The governments of normally importing countries are having recourse to high tariffs, quotas and other protectionist devices to safeguard their own farmers from the flood of imports. It is not intended in this memorandum to discuss the wisdom of such action taken in national interests. It must, however, be recognised that agrarianism in the industrial countries intensifies the difficulties of the agricultural countries.

      These agricultural countries constitute over 60 of the 70 independent countries of the world and contain about 80o/o of the world's population; hence their purchasing power is of the greatest concern to the industrial countries.

- 3        In a number of countries, and perhaps especially in the United Kingdom, considerable attention is being given to the need for better nutritional standards and this may be connect-

ed with the solution of agricultural problems. It is, however, difficult, owing to the competitive situation, for any one country to make progress in this direction on a unilateral basis.

The deliberate association of the agricultural and health problems throughout the countries of western civilisation is urgently necessary.

In this memorandum it is proposed to examine the possibilities of stimulating demand for certain important agricultural foods in the United Kingdom, the United States of America and in Europe, but before doing so it is proposed briefly to mention two important aspects of the supply situation.

4 Everyone is clearly aware of the immense influence upon civilised life of the application of the physical sciences to manufacturing production. This is the industrial revolution. The application of biological discoveries to agriculture has proceeded at a much slower pace. This was inevitable for reasons which it is unnecessary to discuss here. Improvements in breeding, feeding, manuring are, however, being adopted by farmers throughout the world and the effects are cumulative. The results can be seen in, for instance, New Zealand, where the output of animal products increased enormously in the last few years without any significant increase in the area devoted to animal husbandry.

Similar results are being obtained in Australia where, apart from wool, animal husbandry is really almost a series of infant industries.

The cumulative effects of the application of science are causing striking increases in the yield of wheat in Europe, and of sugar and rubber in the tropics. It is indeed a legitimate assumption that the agriculture of every country will sooner or later show the startling effects of what may perhaps be described as the agricultural phase of the industrial revolution.

- 5 Secondly, it is clear that since the onset of the depression, nations have increased their determination to safeguard their agriculture.

Agrarianism has always played a part in the national economy of France, Italy and Germany, but since 1929 the efforts to stimulate agricultural production among the importing countries of Europe has been intensified. One effect has been to decrease the market available to the agricultural exporting countries as the following figures will indicate :

	1929	1933
Imports into Industrial Europe :		
Wheat (mn. bushels)	322	132
Butter (Cwts)	2,987,000	1,620,000
Beef and veal (Cwts)	4,194,000	1,948,000

A further new factor is the anxiety of the United States administration to restore America to her pre-depression position as an agricultural exporting country. In the early stages of the operation of A.A.A., it had been assumed by many foreign observers that the United States agricultural policy implied that American exports of products other than cotton, tobacco and fruit would be on a small scale. To-day the administration has come to the conclusion that agricultural exports are a major factor in American recovery. It is desired to conclude trade treaties by which, in return for concessions on imports of industrial goods, markets can be found for substantial quantities of wheat, dairy products, etc.



6 The position may be summarized as follows: -

- (a) Many importing countries have already carried agrarian protection to such levels as to have become largely self-supporting in the major food products. This has only been accomplished at a high cost; wholesale prices for commodities such as wheat, butter and meat, being from three to four times the price at which these goods could be imported.
- (b) Other importing countries have commenced to orient their economic policies in a somewhat similar direction.
- (c) The U.S.A. may be on the point of attempting through tariff concessions or through subsidy, to stage a large scale 'come back' as an exporter of agricultural goods.
- (d) The exporting countries have, through the application of science, lowered their costs of production and are striving by all means in their power to find markets for their agricultural export industries.

7 It is not intended here to discuss the position in regard to agricultural raw materials such as wool, cotton, rubber, hides and skins, etc. Restrictive policies on such commodities are due rather to financial necessities than to agrarianism. The problem urgently requiring consideration is that of food-stuffs.

8 Side by side with the phenomenon of great increases of actual or immediately potential supplies we are faced by the fact that large masses of the population in the more advanced countries are under-nourished. This does not necessarily mean that any considerable proportion of the population of the Unit-

ed Kingdom, the United States of America, France, Italy or Germany are hungry.

It is indeed probable that increased purchasing power among the masses in these countries would not lead to significant increases in their consumption of such carbo-hydrates as bread or sugar.

The modern science of nutrition has, however, demonstrated that a reasonable standard of health depends upon the dietary including a satisfactory amount of high quality proteins, mineral salts and vitamins. While this is true of all age groups it is of especial significance among children and the breeding age groups.

- 9       The foods which are recognised as being of special value to rectify the nutritional deficiencies referred to above are first and foremost milk, then fresh fruit and vegetables, dairy products including eggs and, for large masses of the poorer sections of the several communities, meat.

These commodities are exactly those which are causing the greatest concern to the Governments of the more advanced countries whether normally importing or exporting agricultural products.

If, therefore, ways could be found to secure a marked increase of consumption of these foods, the results would benefit not only national health but also greatly simplify world agricultural problems.

- 10       It would argue a bankruptcy of statesmanship if it should prove impossible to bring together a great unsatisfied need for highly nutritious food and the immense potential production of modern agriculture.

Indeed it is probable that failure to do so, in the very near future, may lead to undesirably rapid and politically

enforced changes in the present economic system.

**11** Two problems have to be solved if progress is to be made:-

- (a) It is necessary to arouse public interest in the desirability of adequate nutrition of children and what may be described as the young human breeding stock of the advanced countries. (In this memorandum the very important question of improved nutrition in such countries as China or India is not discussed.)
- (b) Means must be found, once public opinion demands better nutritional standards, to enable the poorer classes to obtain the specially beneficial foods.

**12** The first problem should not present serious difficulties. Already public interest in health questions is keen. With the loss of certainty about a future life interest in conditions affecting this terrestrial life has been intensified. If a start was made in the United Kingdom and the United States of America through the mobilisation of scientific and medical opinion and the securing of adequate publicity, the results might be expected rapidly to spread to other countries.

It is stated that in the United Kingdom not less than 10,000,000 people are inadequately fed. Comparable figures for the United States of America are not available but there the figures would probably run into 25 or 30 millions. In Europe east of the Vistula the total would probably exceed that of the United States of America.

Co-operation could, at an early stage, be sought from the Health Section of the League of Nations. The International Labour Office would be interested and might be able to supply most useful data on food consumption in different classes



within certain countries. The International Institute of Agriculture at Rome could be moved to procure and publish comparative figures of the consumption of special foods in different countries.

The whole subject might well be given special prominence at the next General Assembly of the League of Nations. As a result an International Conference on the problems of agriculture and health might be summoned at which the United States of America would probably be prepared to play an important part.

The value to the nations of better dietary could be illustrated in many ways. Thus:-

- (a) It should not be necessary to dilate upon the value of better health to a nation. Anyone who has studied the physique of both urban and rural populations must be convinced of the need for better nutrition. The physical condition of English Labour Battalions in France in 1918 should have shocked even the most unobservant into realisation of the undesirability of a large C3 population.
- (b) The value to the national economy of better feeding leading to better health could readily be demonstrated.
- (c) A declining trend of birthrates is common to all civilised countries. No action which governments can take is likely to check this tendency. Italy has for years conducted propaganda for more births without significant result.

The mere reduction of death rates does not give a satisfactory counterpoise since the result may be a shifting upwards of the weighting of age groups. This increases the burden upon the active proportion of the population.

If, however, infantile mortality rates could be decreased through the better feeding of human breeding stock, from infancy to the age of, at least say, 30, the results, so far as they go, would be similar in effect to an increase of birth rate. The preservation of life is also a far less controversial idea than the stimulation of more life.

In 1932 infantile mortality rates were:-

New Zealand	31 per 1,000
Australia	41
England & Wales	65
Italy	106

Five year plans to secure for Great Britain a rate of infantile mortality not higher than New Zealand, and for Italy one not higher than the present rate in the United Kingdom would be planning on a severaly practical scale and the beneficial results would be incalculable since the measures taken to reduce infantile mortality would also improve national health.

The further elaboration of this side of the problem is probably, at this stage, unnecessary.

**13** A special reference to the position in the United States of America is, however, desirable. The immense potential demand of a population of 125,000,000 people is here found in association with a most formidable potentiality for increased agricultural output. The Administration appears to be faced

by two difficult major alternatives.

- (a) If agricultural outlets cannot be increased, the taking out of cultivation of up to 50,000,000 acres of farm lands is said to be necessary to the solvency of United States agriculture.
- (b) If the United States of America as a creditor country makes great efforts to expand her agricultural exports the effects on the rest of the world may be serious.

If, however, improved nutrition for the poorer classes became a part of the Administration policy, no question of the export of dairy products or meat would arise, and indeed much grain might be used internally for increased animal feeding.

**14** Given an aroused public conscience on nutritional questions in the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Northern and Western Europe, and Italy, how would it prove possible to give the classes most needing better foods the opportunity of obtaining them ?

The whole subject under discussion here might indeed be dismissed by some on the ground that people will always buy as much of the good things of this life as they can afford to pay for.

Apart from the fact that such a comment is by no means true it really begs the whole question.

If world recovery and the maintenance of evolutionary methods of economic change are desirable, then the ideas discussed here may be of the utmost value.

In all of the countries under consideration there is room for educational propaganda as to balanced diets to secure the best possible health in children and adults, to increase resistance to infection, etc. The continued existence of, for



example, such diseases as scurvy, rickets or pellagra in circumstances where a wiser utilization of money available for food would eliminate these evils is sufficient proof of the need.

Another form of educational endeavours might be through the Health Section of the League of Nations drawing the attention of countries to the beneficial effects which might be expected to follow from the increased use of certain foods. Thus although the dietetic value of citrus fruits is fully established yet Polish imports of oranges, lemons, etc. only allow of one citrus fruit per year among 2.5 Poles, whereas each Englishman enjoys about 70 per annum.

Each country would need to consider what form of publicity would best suit its circumstances. In the United Kingdom the revival of a body closely akin to the Empire Marketing Board charged with the complementary duties of education propaganda and practical large scale tests of the results of improved nutrition might prove a satisfactory method.

Propaganda alone, although most necessary, could not go very far towards securing the double objective of general human betterment and increased consumption of agricultural products.

It is also necessary to secure that the poorer classes of the community shall be able to obtain the foods necessary to adequate health.

Today there is likely to be far less resistance to Government action to secure such ends than before Mr. Roosevelt championed the cause of social justice. The well-to-do classes must increasingly realise that, at least for some time to come, the alternative to such endeavours as Mr. Roosevelt is making is not a swing back to the right but wild schemes of confiscation from the extreme left. Already in countries other than the United States of America action by Governments to secure a more equitable distribution of wealth is being discussed by conservative leaders.

Under these circumstances one need not anticipate violent opposition to methods for securing better nutritional standards even if to achieve such ends the State has to intervene.

Methods of state action include:-

- (a) Measures to increase the proportion of the profits of industry paid to employees. Such questions are far beyond the scope of this memorandum.
- (b) Methods of social provision.
- (c) Methods based on reduction of distributive costs.
- (d) In certain countries where wholesale prices are very high, the modification of extreme agrarian protection.

**15**  
**Social**  
**provision**

The provision of food as a method of relief or the cheapening of food by method of subsidy has been practised in a number of countries. Thus the Irish Free State, Holland and Denmark distribute free beef to necessitous people and Denmark also distributes margarine. These measures have been adopted more to solve pressing economic problems than in order to improve nutritional standards. The Winterhelfe Campaign in Germany is also noteworthy. It is sometimes objected that such methods lower the morale of the recipients. It is possible that the provision of food like the receipt of a 'dole' may in some cases have an antisocial effect upon adults.

The Milk for School Children Scheme in the United Kingdom may provide a pointer towards a way of securing the objective of better nutrition without effects upon morale.

The onset of the depression caused a halt in the policy of the provision of social services in many countries but with the advent of recovery the demand for greater social equality

will necessitate the extension of arrangements making for a more equal distribution of wealth.

The betterment of the health of school children is a most satisfactory way of giving partial effect to this demand.

The idea of making a nutritious lunch a part of State School curriculum is worthy of consideration. Free education is accepted in all the countries under discussion. Education given to under-nourished children is frequently wasted. If a meal consisting of precisely those elements of food which the children are apt to lack in their home meals were given on five days a week to all scholars without any question of enquiry into necessitous cases, the improvement in health would greatly increase powers to assimilate knowledge. The improvements in health would probably go far to reduce the cost of health services and thus, although the cost of daily lunches would be considerable, the nation might well expect to gain considerably as a result of such expenditure.

It is possible that the cost of school lunches might be in part offset by a reduction of other subsidies now paid to secure the prosperity of agriculture.

**Reduction of  
distribution  
costs**

Costs of production vary largely from country to country. In the United Kingdom and the urban areas of the United States of America these costs include a large amount of service and are high. In countries where the housewife visits a retail market and carries home her purchases, the costs are low. Indeed in European countries where the retail market is a normal procedure, the low costs of distribution go a considerable way to offset the nationally detrimental effect of extremely high wholesale prices.

Retail markets or trade on a 'cash and carry' basis for the sale of dairy produce, meat, fruit and vegetables in certain districts might be developed in selected industrial areas and arrangements might be made to prevent retailers from load-



ing part of the costs of their 'credit and delivery' systems on their 'cash and carry' customers.

Cheap supplies of milk might be made available by the installation of the milk pump on the lines of the petrol pump with methods for sterilizing receptacles brought by the housewife. The present door to door distribution of milk in bottles is said to add rather more than a third to the retail cost of milk.

The cost of distribution of meat might be reduced by the adoption of central slaughtering while, on the other hand, the present wastage of fresh vegetables might be decreased by the organisation of supplies to the proposed retail markets.

Another aspect of the cost of distribution raises the question of whether it is not desirable that certain great branches of distribution of commodities such as milk or preliminary processing, such as milling, should be conducted more on the lines of public utility services than as a purely profit making business enterprise. There is a clear tendency in many large businesses for the management increasingly to place considerations of the public service on at least as high a plane as profits. This is a most salutary form of evolutionary change.

The large profits made by certain great distributing and processing firms in the United Kingdom during the years of the agricultural depression give added point to this consideration.

**Reduction  
of wholesale  
prices**

At the present time the wholesale price of most of the specially nutritious foods are very low in the United Kingdom, especially for imported supplies. On the other hand wholesale prices in most European industrial countries are very high. The following table indicates the difference in wholesale prices between London and certain continental markets:-

Domestic wheat prices, December 1933.

	Per bushel
Great Britain (market price)	2s. 1½d.
Czecho-Slovakia	4s. 7d.
Italy	4s. 11d.
Germany	4s. 11½d.
France	5s. 4 d.
Switzerland	11s. 7 d.

Prices of butter at various European markets

	Per cwt.
Great Britain (New Zealand butter at London)	69s. 9d.
Denmark (Copenhagen)	83s. 6d.
Belgium (Hasselt)	185s. -
Germany	186s. 6d.
France (Paris)	238s. 3d.

These high prices are the greatest obstacle to better nutrition in France, Germany, Italy and Switzerland. It is almost inconceivable that the cost of production of butter is three times as high in France as it is in New Zealand, yet French wholesale prices suggest this.

Europe is determined to maintain a large proportion of peasant farmers and any schemes which do not allow for this settled aspect of national policies are doomed to failure. There appears, however, to be every reason to believe that a higher efficiency in local agriculture and some lowering of the tariff and quota barriers would greatly benefit Europe.

An aroused public conscience might well insist that the price the farmer must pay for protection is reasonably high efficiency and prices not unduly restrictive on the consumption of the poorer classes.

The existence of such a sentiment would greatly simplify the problems facing those European governments which realise the disadvantages of too extreme agricultural protection but have not yet found it politically possible to introduce modifications.

(NOTE : - Industrial European countries which are also great powers have recently found their own agrarian policy a considerable handicap when they desire to conclude politically desirable treaties with predominantly agricultural States. The great power which cannot give commercial advantages to an agricultural client is, in part, shorn of power.)

The factors outlined in this paragraph present varied but certainly great difficulties. If, however, both governments and peoples realised the immense advantages of the increased consumption of those foods which the world has already in apparent oversupply, there is little doubt that means of overcoming the difficulties could be evolved. Each country would adopt the methods most suited to its natural and political conditions but the simultaneous prosecution of many differing paths towards the goal of better national health would have a profound effect in stimulating world economic recovery.

16        It is not intended to suggest that the objectives discussed could be very rapidly attained or that their accomplishment do not involve considerable difficulties.

      The advantages to be secured from a great drive throughout the countries of relatively advanced Western civilization are, however, so numerous that it would be well worth while to strain every nerve to secure action.

      The more obvious advantages would include:-

- (a)        Better health, with all its concomitant blessings.
- (b)        A postponement of the burden of a great increase of the proportion of the population in the higher age groups.
- (c)        To the industrial countries, an opportunity for a reorientation of agricultural policy; they could continue to protect efficient production but increased demand would allow of a simultaneous increase of import trade with beneficial effects upon their industrial export industries.
- (d)        To the agricultural countries the advantages are obvious. Those which do not at present export much meat, fruit or dairy products might find an increased export outlet for animal feedingstuffs.

*This was written in the summer of 1935. The economic crisis continued almost unabated, wasted surpluses inflamed public opinion, and the political situation became more tense. It was thought that the League, being thwarted by insoluble political problems might be persuaded to turn constructively to economic and social issues. Stanley Bruce (later Lord Bruce of*

*Melbourne delivered a great speech to the Assembly of the League of Nations on 11 September 1935, in which the ideas expressed in the McDougall brief were forcefully presented. The need to "marry health and agriculture" was publicly voiced for the first time.*

**The Rt. Hon.  
S. M. Bruce  
(Australia)**

In the past it has been the accepted practice that speeches made in the plenary session at the commencement of the annual meeting of the Assembly should be of a general character; a review of the report of the Secretary-General.

On the present occasion, the Assembly of the League is meeting under the shadow of a great political issue. Vital as the interests are of the nations immediately concerned, even more grave are the issues which emerge, because they involve the whole structure which has been erected since the great war for the maintenance of peace by collective action.

The external policy of every nation, great or small, now a Member of the League has been based, during recent years, upon the principles of the renunciation of war and of collective action for the maintenance of peace. Those principles have been expressed, apart from the Covenant of the League, in the Pact of Paris, the Locarno Treaties and the Agreements of Stresa. Is there any nation here which does not regard its vital interests as being safeguarded by one or other of those instruments and whose foreign policy is not based upon the assistance that the collective action embodied in them would assure in the hour of need?

If the crisis, which now confronts the League, cannot be resolved, can any of those things endure? Of this question, I will say no more. It has been referred, by the Council, to a Committee composed of the representatives of five Member States. It seems to me, therefore, that, while this Committee has the whole question under review, speeches delivered in this plenary session should avoid dealing with this matter lest words spoken here might add to the difficulties of those

who are working unremittingly to find a solution. I feel that anything we might say would be more likely to complicate than facilitate the important task upon which that Committee is engaged.

It is important, however, that we should remember that the League is not concerned solely with political questions but is active also in relation to financial, economic, humanitarian and social issues of most vital concern to all nations. It is towards one of the League's activities in this sphere that, for a few minutes, I desire to direct the attention of the Assembly.

A number of delegations have requested the Agenda Committee of the Assembly to give a special place on the agenda to the subject of nutrition. This afternoon, the President has placed before the Assembly the recommendation of the Agenda Committee that this question should be placed upon the agenda of the Second Committee and we now have an opportunity of considering it there.

No question can be of greater importance to every Government represented here than the health of their respective peoples, since sound national health is the very basis of the well-being of every nation.

I do not suggest that national health is not improving throughout the world. There is, indeed, ample evidence that our standards of health are rising.

The progress of science has led, and is leading, to immense improvements, and we have now reached a stage when it seems certain that we are about to witness a further great stride towards better national health.

During the nineteenth century, there were great developments in the science of sanitation, with the result that there was a new understanding of the importance of proper systems of drainage and water supply, particularly in great cities. As a result, there are now, in all civilised countries, the most stringent regulations with regard to both these questions and, to-day, in most countries, any public authority which neglects to



provide a proper drainage system and to enforce the health regulations would be swept out of existence by public indignation.

Again, during the nineteenth century, as the result of the work of many scientists, among whom that great Frenchman, Pasteur, was pre-eminent, an understanding was achieved of the science of bacteriology, resulting in an appreciation of the causes of infectious diseases. This led immediately to an entirely new outlook on the control of infectious diseases, and the most stringent regulations were laid down and strictly enforced for the protection of the public health.

No one can calculate the benefits which have accrued to the health of all nations from the action taken by Governments as a result of the information which science has made available. These things were done in an age when we would claim that the social and humanitarian conscience of the world was far less aroused than it is to-day. Now, science is telling us something new that can be done to improve national health and to eradicate many forms of disease that are causing untold suffering and distress to humanity. That information is about the importance of nutrition in the elimination of disease and the raising of the standard of health. There appears to be overwhelming evidence that, in most nations to-day, given their present standards of sanitation and the control of infectious diseases, nutrition is far the most important factor influencing public health.

In the 'Quarterly Bulletin' of the Health Organisation of the League, a most informative and interesting report is published by Messrs. Burnet and Aykroyd on the question of nutrition in its relation to public health. The evidence which we have before us, and that evidence I am going to ask the Assembly to have confirmed and amplified, would appear to indicate clearly that, by means of better nutrition, the standard of health of the peoples of all nations could be improved. If that is so, surely an imperative duty rests upon all Governments to take whatever steps lie in their power to bring about such a result.

Great progress has already been achieved in combating disease by means of nutrition, and some diseases due to faulty nutrition - such as, for example, scurvy - have become relatively rare. But what has been accomplished is nothing compared to the possibilities of achievement if the scientific discoveries during recent years in the fields of physiology and bio-chemistry were more completely utilised. These discoveries have given us a completely new conception of the food requirements of our peoples.

It has been customary in the past to regard the human body as a machine requiring certain quantities of energy-producing foods to enable it to function. Human requirements were calculated in terms of energy units or, in other words, calories. The discovery of the vitamin, the realisation of the profound significance of mineral salts and of the need for high-quality proteins has brought us to the point where we know that calories are not enough.

In the admirable report on nutrition and public health, published by the Health Section of the League, to which I have already referred, some of the possibilities of better health through improved nutrition are visualised. Those possibilities include a reduced rate of infantile mortality, healthier and happier children, mothers saved from anaemia, the elimination of such scourges as pellagra and beri-beri and a great decrease in the incidence of tuberculosis.

I cannot take up the time of the Assembly, however, in discussing, nor, indeed, am I competent to discuss, the many benefits to health which would follow from improved nutrition. I can only refer you to many admirable works that have been published on the subject which certainly emphasise sufficiently the necessity for that question being considered most seriously by all nations.

I will, however, refer to one aspect of the question which must be of the greatest possible interest to everyone. Infantile mortality is a serious wastage of human life and in these days of declining birth rates it is a menace to many

nations. Medical science has demonstrated that infantile mortality is closely related to nutrition. In New Zealand and Australia, the consumption of health preserving foodstuffs is high and in New Zealand infantile mortality rates have been reduced to 32 per 1,000 and in Australia to about 40 per 1,000. The New Zealand figure is less than half the rate in the United States of America, in the United Kingdom, and in many European countries.

Assuming it to be established that improved nutrition would benefit national health, we have to consider what are the essential food products to bring about that improved condition. They are generally referred to as the protective foodstuffs and include milk and dairy products, vegetables, fruit, eggs and meat. Unfortunately, these forms of food are relatively expensive and, as a result, in the poorer countries, a large proportion of the population can make little use of these sources of health. Even in richer countries, a very substantial proportion of the poorer classes is living on diets that, from any modern standard, can only be regarded as deficient. While the statistical information is by no means complete, such evidence as is at present available comes mostly from countries where relatively high standards of living prevail. Even in those countries, it is apparent that a proportion of the population, varying from 10 to 15 per cent, and even to much higher figures, is living on diets that cannot give adequate protection from disease and which are certainly insufficient to build up the powers of resistance of children and of mothers.

With these facts before us we are faced, however, with the problem of making available, to those in need of them, the necessary supplies of these relatively high priced protective foodstuffs.

It is not possible that there is a way out of this difficulty if we have the vision and the courage to take it? In taking it, might we not be making a contribution towards a solution of one of the greatest, if not the greatest, of the

world's economic problems? We are all painfully familiar with what is known as the agricultural crisis. These difficulties of farmers in Europe are a pre-occupation of every European State. The difficulties of the agricultural exporting countries are reflected in unemployment in the industrial exporting countries. Is it not possible that our newly acquired knowledge of the importance of nutrition to public health might open the way to a solution of the world's agricultural problem? Is it not the case that, to-day, most countries are facing a most paradoxical situation? Ministers of Agriculture and their advisers are wrestling with problems of apparent over-production. Increased yields are being regretted and abundance is often officially deplored. At the same time, Ministers of Health and their official and medical advisers are realising, more and more, that public health demands an increased consumption of many of the very products about which the Departments of Agriculture are so unhappy.

Millions of pounds are being spent annually in subsidies, bonuses and other forms of assistance to agriculture. Side by side with that expenditure millions of pounds are being devoted to combating disease. Is it not possible to marry health and agriculture and, by so doing, make a great step in the improvement of national health and, at the same time, an appreciable contribution to the solution of the agricultural problem?

This question was raised at the last International Labour Conference and it was decided unanimously that the International Labour Office should prepare a report for full consideration at next year's Conference. It is clearly necessary, however, for the Health Organisation of the League to examine the whole question fully and to obtain from experts an authoritative report as to the benefits to public health which would follow a greater consumption of the protective foods. When this report is available, the Economic Organisation should proceed to consider the ways in which increased consumption would affect world agriculture and our general economic situation.

This question obviously is one more suitable for detailed discussion in Committee than in the Assembly.

I am profoundly impressed with the urgency for an enquiry, on an international basis, into the significance of nutrition in regard to public health. I ask my fellow-delegates for their sympathetic co-operation in the consideration of this question, which I believe to be of fundamental importance to the well-being of mankind.

*The speech found an immediate and enthusiastic response from the Assembly and a Resolution was passed urging the Health Committee to continue its work. The Resolution reads :*

The Assembly,

Having considered the subject of nutrition in relation to public health and of the effects of improved nutrition on the consumption of agricultural products ;

Urges Governments to examine the practical means of securing better nutrition and requests the Council:

- (1) to invite the Health Organisation of the League of Nations to continue and extend its work on nutrition in relation to public health;
- (2) to instruct the technical organisations of the League of Nations, in consultation with the International Labour Office and the International Institute of Agriculture, to collect, summarise and publish information on the measures taken in all countries for securing improved nutrition; and
- (3) to appoint a Committee, including agricultural, economic and health experts, instructed to submit a general report on the whole question, in its health and economic

mic aspects, to the next Assembly, after taking into consideration, inter alia, the progress of the work carried out in accordance with paragraphs (1) and (2) above.

*Bruce, McDougall and their friends were cheered to see that their ideas had been so well received and McDougall, widely known for his remarkable knowledge and memory of English literature and the English language, was charged with sending a telegram to their ally John Boyd Orr. McDougall cabled :*

*“ BROTHER ORR, WE HAVE THIS DAY LIGHTED SUCH A CANDLE, BY GOD’S GRACE, IN GENEVA, AS WE TRUST SHALL NEVER BE PUT OUT.”*

*( When Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley were condemned to death at the stake for heresy in 1555, the former said :*

*“ Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day light such a candle, by God’s grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out.” )*

*The candle had been lit. The new approach could be seen clearly in the report published in 1937 by the League following the work initiated by the Assembly resolution : “ The Relation of Nutrition to Health, Agriculture, and Economic Policy.” It became a best-seller and inspired governments to take practical steps to improve the diet of their peoples. In 1939 the lights went out again in Europe and soon the whole world was involved. But even during the war itself the movement started in Geneva bore fruit, for some countries succeeded in safeguarding their peoples from starvation and malnutrition in difficult circumstances by applying the principles of nutrition. The candle that had been lit in Geneva was not entirely extinguished. Even in the international field, it had able and faithful keepers and among them McDougall. During discussions on an international wheat agreement in Washington in 1942 another McDougall memorandum was drafted. Here proposals were outlined for an international organization which would make the marriage between health and agriculture a reality.*



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**DRAFT MEMORANDUM ON A UNITED NATIONS  
PROGRAM FOR FREEDOM FROM WANT OF FOOD**

‘‘FREEDOM FROM WANT.... FOR ALL MEN EVERYWHERE IN THE WORLD  
ATTAINABLE IN OUR OWN DAY AND GENERATION.’’

The President of the United States,  
January, 1941

‘‘Is it not possible to marry health and agriculture and, by  
so doing, make a great step in the improvement of national  
health and, at the same time, an appreciable contribution to  
the solution of the agricultural problem?’’

Mr. S. M. Bruce,  
League of Nations Assembly, 1935

‘‘The malnutrition which exists in all countries is at once a  
challenge and an opportunity : a challenge to men’s consciences  
and an opportunity to eradicate a social evil by methods  
which will increase economic prosperity.’’

League of Nations’ Report on Nutrition,  
1937

‘‘Our great Allies must recognize, in their turn, that it is  
not enough to set free our enslaved peoples. Liberation can  
only lead to improved conditions for us all, if our Allies are  
prepared to make with us a sustained effort of long-term re-  
construction, based on scientific methods and democratic prac-  
tice.’’

Agricultural Representatives of  
Peasant Europe, London, 1942

**I. The pledges  
of the United  
Nations**

The purpose of the United Nations is first to win the war and then to win the peace.

To win the peace we must, during the war, reach agreements which will determine the pattern of the postwar world.

Our pledges have been given in the President's Four Freedoms, the Atlantic Charter, the Mutual Aid Agreements, the International Wheat Agreement and in declarations by representatives of the governments of the United Nations.

We have promised to our own citizens, and to the peoples of the world, freedom from want through an expansive economy with full employment, better labour conditions and social security. We have, in effect, undertaken to engage in a worldwide campaign against poverty.

**II. Co-operation  
for an expansive  
world economy**

At the end of the first world war we believed that it would be possible immediately to return to 'normalcy.' Wartime mechanisms for economic co-operation were abruptly discarded in favour of 'business as before.' The history of the between - wars decades - unemployment at unparalleled levels throughout the world; the unsuccessful struggle against monetary chaos; the insecurity which proved a forcing bed for the growth of Nazi terrorism; malnutrition and hunger with world markets burdened with surplus food - is sufficient indication of the magnitude of our error.

The stress of war has forced us to return to international co-operation and if our pledges are to be fulfilled we must, during the war, prepare to enlarge and adapt our wartime co-operation for the purposes of peace. To achieve freedom from want will require many forms of action in the economic and financial fields.

The more advanced countries must ensure their citizens full employment and the provision, to everyone willing to work, of diets, housing and health facilities adequate to develop and maintain their vigour, efficiency and intelli-

gence. The prosperous nations must also assist other nations to develop their potentialities and to achieve as high a standard of living as their resources permit.

Finance must become the servant and not the master of the world economic system. No human or physical resources in any country should be forced to remain idle or to fail of development owing to the lack of adequate financial mechanisms. International financial arrangements must be devised to make possible consumption on a scale commensurate with the world's capacity to produce.

The interest of the consumer will require the most efficient use of the world's agricultural and industrial resources and greatly expanded world trade.

The United Nations, and ultimately all nations, must participate, as partners in world reconstruction, in world authorities set up to direct international methods for winning the peace and to coordinate national endeavors.

### **III. The priority of food policies**

Freedom from want of food must be given high priority in the actions taken to fulfill the pledges of the United Nations. For not only is food the most essential of human needs but the production of food is the principal economic activity of man.

We have determined to provide relief to the war-torn countries as soon as they are liberated. In this relief, food will be the most urgent need but we must carry straight on from relief and rehabilitation to reconstruction and development.

#### **(a) Health**

Lack of adequate food is the sole cause of some prevalent diseases and is the principal predisposing cause of many others such as tuberculosis; it destroys vigor and inhibits mental alertness; it is accompanied by premature death.

Although the application of modern nutritional knowledge to public health is a development of only the last twenty-five years, we already know that sound nutrition will reduce the toll of disease and will also do more to secure sound minds in healthy bodies than any other social reform.

In the 19th century the discoveries of the bacteriologists and the achievements of the sanitary reformers greatly reduced the toll taken by infectious disease.

The provision to all classes of adequate diets would lead to an advance in public health comparable to that which followed the work of Pasteur.

(b) Food Deficiencies

No country can boast that all its citizens obtain adequate food.

The best fed countries are those where the national income is both high and relatively equitably distributed, but even in these countries about a quarter of the population do not obtain enough of the foods needed for abundant health.

In those countries where the contrast between the income groups is more pronounced at least a third of the people suffer from malnutrition.

In the rest of the world malnutrition and hunger are the lot of a majority of the people. '“Most Chinese suffer from malnutrition all the time”', is the opening sentence in a report of the Chinese Government to the League of Nations. The same could be said with equal truth of other large areas of the world.

(c) Social Importance of Agriculture

About 60 percent of the world's gainfully employed population is engaged in agricultural pursuits. The proportion varies from about 35 percent in Europe to

over 70 percent in Asia and Africa. Food production probably represents 90 percent of the total activity of world agriculture. Thus the conditions under which farm people live and work are the most important social problems of most countries. Freedom from want of food is therefore of double significance to the great bulk of the world's population for in addition to its direct effect upon their individual welfare, its attainment must require a widespread improvement in agricultural efficiency\*. This can only be brought about if education and sanitation, security of tenure and adequate credits are progressively extended to the farm people of each nation and continent.

(d) Effects Upon World Economic Activity

The fact that farming still remains the principal economic activity of the bulk of mankind and the further fact that there is great need to increase food production are in themselves clear indications of the effects which the widespread adoption of sound nutritional policies would have upon world economic activity.

Progress towards the attainment of the goal of freedom from want of food will require measures in every country to increase the efficiency of agriculture, to improve farm plant and equipment and to secure better methods of transportation and distribution. It will also call for a great expansion of the facilities for processing, warehousing and handling food. These developments will create a substantial demand for industrial goods.

The solution of the agricultural problems of such

\* The use of the term 'agricultural efficiency' throughout this Memorandum does not necessarily imply modern mechanized or commercial farming; family-sized farms are more efficient in industrialized and densely populated regions and many areas require a great increase in subsistence farming.

densely populated countries as China, India, Java and parts of Eastern Europe requires, in addition to agricultural reforms, industrialization which will involve large capital expenditures over a series of years for electrification and other development projects. But, parallel with the industrialization of such countries sound technical assistance in agricultural production together with relatively small financial outlays would enable these countries, as well as others, to make great progress in the improvement of their agricultures.

The acceptance of sound nutrition policies must also involve a determination on the part of governments drastically to reduce agricultural protectionism. International co-operation to secure freedom from want of food will necessitate a great increase in world trade, especially in the staple agricultural products. International investment to improve agriculture can contribute materially to world economic activity before the larger scale methods of development can be expected to exert their full influence.

#### **IV. World food requirements**

Although information about food consumption is too inadequate to enable accurate estimates to be made of the needs of each area of the world for the various foods, preliminary work indicates that to provide diets adequate for health for everybody in all parts of the world food supplies would probably need to be doubled.

The goal must be to ensure that all sections of the population, farm people included, have enough of the right kinds of food. To accomplish this on a world basis would require expansion of production of the following orders of magnitude : cereals, 50 percent ; meat, 90 percent ; milk and other dairy products, 125 percent; vegetable oils, 125 percent; and fruits and vegetables, 300 percent.



Much closer estimates can be made of the food requirements for certain countries. In the United States, for example, where diets are comparatively good, a program of adequate consumption would require increases over the 1936-40 average of about : 40 million acres in crops - the increases varying from only one percent in the case of food grains to 75 percent in the case of truck crops -; 39 percent in milk cows; 23 percent in hens (for eggs); 9 percent in chickens (for meat); 16 percent in sheep and lambs; 15 percent in hogs; 7 percent in beef cattle; and 5 percent in veal calves.

In the southern States over six million acres of cropland and nine million acres of pasture land would be needed to supply the additional farm-grown products needed for the farm families of that region alone.

Estimates made for the United Kingdom in 1934 indicate that if food consumption for the whole population was raised to that of the top 10 percent (i.e. those who spend 12 shillings per week per head on food) this would have required 80 percent more milk, 40 percent more butter, 55 percent more eggs, 30 percent more meat, 125 percent more fruit and 90 percent more vegetables.

The keystone of agricultural re-orientation should be the principle that the first duty of domestic agriculture is to make the most economical contribution, from the standpoint of the nation as a whole, to the food supplies required by the citizens of the country concerned.

## **V. Food and income**

One of our most urgent immediate problems is the inability of the lower-income groups to buy sufficient food to maintain good health. Its solution will depend upon economic and social policies designed to increase purchasing power and to reduce the costs of production and distribution.

The needs of the poorer people in many countries however demand the adoption of direct methods of making certain foods available at lower than commercial prices. The methods where-

by this objective will be carried out will vary from country to country. A number of countries had already in prewar years tentatively adopted methods of subsidizing supplies of certain foods for mothers and children. In the United States a further development and modification of the Food Stamp Plan or some other variant of the system may prove a suitable method. One method which might well be recommended for world-wide application is the provision of nutritious lunches and of milk to all children under school-leaving age. If these were as freely provided as teaching and text books, the effect upon the well-being of children and adolescents would be profound.

Food rationing is now general in the United Kingdom and in continental Europe and it may become more generally necessary in the United States and Dominions. Wartime rationing restricts the consumption of the higher-income groups but cut down waste and improves, at least relatively, the position of the lower-income groups. We may find an opportunity of developing war methods for the more liberal purposes of peace.

Rationing in the United Kingdom is accompanied by government subsidies to keep the retail prices of certain imported and home-grown foods within the purchasing power of the lower-income groups. In war this involves large sums to offset high transport charges and high prices paid to encourage domestic production. In peace time lesser sums wisely allocated to encourage the production, distribution and consumption of the most needed foods would go far to secure for all, diets adequate for health.

The most important method of solving this problem is to increase national agricultural efficiency and to abandon, in favor of cheaper imports, high-cost domestic production of those foods for which a country is at a comparative disadvantage. In the long run this would be just as advantageous to producers as to consumers.

Although poverty is the chief cause of inadequate diets, faulty food habits are common to all income groups. Action programs designed to achieve diets adequate for health within

the means of every citizen should therefore be accompanied by educational campaigns to induce all groups to change their consumption habits to the extent necessary to reach this goal.

## **VI. Commercial policy**

Eleven of the United Nations have pledged themselves in the Mutual Aid Agreements "to the elimination of all forms of discriminatory treatment in international commerce, and to the reduction of tariffs and other trade barriers..." The fulfilment of this pledge will greatly assist in the provision of diets adequate for health at a cost within the reach of all by encouraging the production of protective foods, as well as of staple products, in countries and regions where production is most efficient.

During the decade before the present war many nations, especially in Europe, were impelled either in preparation for war or by considerations of defense to adjust their agricultures to strategical factors. This led governments to attempt to secure agricultural self-sufficiency by greatly expanding the production of energy foods, especially bread cereals and sugar, at the expense of the health and standards of living of their peoples. The pledges of the United Nations to prevent a renewal of aggression should remove this strategical motive from the planning of the national agricultures of the food importing countries and preclude its use in the future as an excuse for agricultural protectionism.

Making adequate nutrition the first concern of agricultural policy would require a reversal of the pre-war movement toward agricultural self-sufficiency. It would involve a marked increase in the local production of such perishable foods as liquid milk, fresh vegetables and soft fruits and there are many other farm products for which soil, climate and proximity to markets give advantages to the home producers. The adoption of sound nutrition policies would, on the other hand, probably result in the industrial countries of Continental

Europe importing two or three times as much bread cereals, sugar and feed grains as before the war.

## **VII. International organizations**

The achievement of the United Nations' purposes, summarized in the President's phrases 'Freedom from Want' and 'Freedom from Fear', will require the establishment of a World Authority. This Authority will have both political and economic functions. Its economic mechanisms will need to cover a wide range of economic, financial and social activities.

The need is to establish at once a United Nations Organization, such as an Economic Council, charged with the duty of preparing the plans and mechanisms required for dealing with the principal problems of economic reconstruction. The Economic Council should appoint Technical Commissions to work out definite proposals.

The Technical Commission on Food and Agriculture should formulate action programs designed to assist the nations to achieve freedom from want of food. Its recommendations should include ways and means of setting up an International Agricultural Authority and the methods whereby such an Authority would work in close liaison with the suggested International Bank and its subsidiary International Agricultural Credit Bank and International Raw Materials Authority and an International Authority established to assist in the development of backward areas throughout the world.

It should be the duty of the Economic Council of the United Nations to see that the work of each Technical Commission is coordinated with that of the other Commissions.

The Technical Commission on Food and Agriculture should be requested to report to the Economic Council within six months and its report should contain specific and comprehensive recommendations regarding the constitution, organization and functions of the proposed International Agricultural Authority.

**VIII. Action by the  
United Nations**

The more prosperous countries of the United Nations should pledge themselves (A) to institute policies designed to secure that diets adequate for health are available and within the purchasing power of all their citizens; (B) to assist other nations towards the progressive accomplishment of the same objective; and (C) to commence immediately to implement these pledges by undertaking: -

(i) During the War and the Relief Period :

- (a) to institute or continue the rationing of essential foods in short supply for as long after the war as is necessary to enable the inter-governmental relief body adequately to perform its functions of relieving distress in the homes of the nationals of both the victor and vanquished powers;
- (b) to stimulate the production of such protective foods as can be readily processed and stored until the war is over;
- (c) to take appropriate action to secure a more equitable distribution of food within their own territories, subject to the need to provide food to maintain the war effort and to provide stockpiles for postwar relief;

(ii) After the Immediate Postwar Relief Period :

- (a) to adopt such social and agricultural policies as shall ensure in the more prosperous countries the attainment of the goal of diets adequate

for health for all within a five year period, and in the less prosperous countries, the progressive attainment of this goal;

- (b) to institute international action to make available to the backward countries financial and technical assistance for the development and reorientation of agriculture and the improvement of the nutrition of their people.

## **IX. The time factor**

The necessity for immediate action cannot be over-emphasized. We must act now if we are to avoid the risk of losing the peace.

Our own peoples, the enslaved peoples of Europe and Asia and also many people in enemy countries long to know what use the United Nations will make of their victory. This knowledge is the ammunition of psychological warfare. Its provision and effective use will shorten the war.

The end of the war will find all peoples impatient for a return to peace conditions. The United Nations must be ready with measures and organizations to carry out their pledges, otherwise national legislatures may adopt ill-considered, short-sighted and nationalistic policies and vested interests will re-entrench themselves.

Our programs for the actions to be taken during each of the three periods of war, relief and reconstruction should all be put forward now on behalf of the United Nations.

Although, owing to the exigencies of war, the United States and the British Commonwealth are in a more favorable position than other countries, now more grievously oppressed by aggressors, to make major contributions to the preparation for post-war reconstruction, there must be no attempt to impose an Anglo-American way of life on the world.

We look forward to a co-operative World Commonwealth to which every nation will make its individual contribution, in



which variety of culture will be matched by unity of purpose to secure for all the four essential freedoms, and the right to participate in, and contribute freely to, international counsels for the future welfare of mankind.

*The rest of the story is well known. The President of the United States, through the intervention of Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, became interested in ideas which in many respect were close to his own. He talked to McDougall and convened the Hot Springs Conference in May 1943, which was followed by preparatory work and the final establishment of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations at the Quebec Conference, in October 1945. Since then FAO has been at work for more than ten years; difficult, uphill and slow work at times, but always inspired by the warmth and light of the candle that was kindled in Geneva.*

*What may not be equally well known is the role McDougall played in these later years. He certainly did not look upon his pioneer achievements from an admiring distance, saying: "Look, I have done my share". He has been in the thick of the work of the Organization during the last 10 years. He never liked the front seat much, but his guidance was always sought and his advice attentively listened to.*

*He has been the spokesman for FAO and its ideas at innumerable international conferences all over the world, establishing friendships and following for the Organization wherever he spoke, either in plenary sessions or in private gatherings. He has helped in making FAO known to and respected by her sister United Nations Organizations and Agencies. He has always insisted that FAO cannot be a mere technical organization working in isolation, but that its activities must fit into a larger framework encompassing the whole economic and social field.*

*He has inspired many of the men and women who have decided to devote their capabilities and energies to world-wide service which FAO represents. Frank McDougall has been one of the main movers in the conception, birth and growth of our FAO. His personality will never cease to permeate its life.*



**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS - ROME - ITALY**

