

Quo Vadis?

According to news reports around 25 000 people are benefiting from an emergency feeding scheme. The Department of National Health and Welfare, and private welfare organizations, like the Red Cross are involved.

While having sympathy with hungry people, and supporting the efforts to help, we have to ask ourselves, "Why are these people starving". The following problems are contributing to the problem viz:

A) Population Growth:

The annual population growth hovers around three percent. Fifty percent of the population is 15 years or younger, and therefore unproductive. Between 5 to 10 percent are retired and no longer make a contribution. Presently only 20 percent of the population are gainfully economically employed, and of this group, one quarter works for the State. The balance 20-25% are either subsistence farmers or unemployed.

The population growth outstrips food production, housing resources, schooling, health services and job creation. As a result the population becomes poorer and poorer, and the economically active group smaller in proportion. It is always tempting in an effort to redistribute wealth, to heavily tax this group. Care must however be taken not to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs.

B) Drought:

Namibia is a semi-desert country and droughts are part of life. The problem arises when the odd few good rainfall years are taken as the norm and no provision is made for the inevitable bad years in nature's cycle.

C) Farming Methods:

Farming methods are sometimes very destructive, especially in the communal areas. There, no rotation grazing is implemented and very little control is exercised over stock numbers. Traditionally the number of cattle is a symbol of wealth, irrespective of their condition. Owners are also often loathe to sell their cattle, even in times of drought, with resultant destruction of grazing and death, as witnessed a few years ago in Kaokoveld. The result is the same as in the Sahel region in North Africa. Man has totally upset the delicate balance of nature for short term gain, with longterm destructive results.

D) Guerrilla War:

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The war, especially in Owambo, contributes to the misery of the locals. As a result of the political uncertainty and lack of international recognition, investments are not readily made in Namibia, with resultant meagre job creation. The spill-over of the war in Angola, stretches our limited resources with refugees.

E) Good Medical Services:

As a result of good medical services more people survive in an otherwise often hostile environment. There is a sense of fatalism and the belief that the State will provide for all needs. This is often demanded as a right which the State has to satisfy. Unfortunately this demand is not matched by responsibility or contribution. In order to try and solve the problem, and to avoid an ecological and biological disaster, the problem must be tackled with political will.

A) Population Planning:

Namibia is not a rich country. Many of its resources are transient e.g. diamonds (CDM), base minerals (TCL), uranium (Rössing), gas (KUDU), and gold (Karibib). When the mines close, this source of income is gone. The resources remaining will be farming, fishing, tourism and human. If the human resource is planned and nurtured it will be the most important. One just has to look at Japan, a country with virtually no natural resources, but an incredible human resource.

Due to the population explosion, China has taken drastic steps aiming at one child per family. Parents who want more will have to pay and forfeit free services and free schooling. This may sound very radical but one has to be cruel to be kind. The alternative is another Ethiopia. Here the initial worldwide enthusiasm and Bob Geldoff waned as soon as the TV images faded and aid mismanagement became known.

Population planning can also not be seen in the white/black political context. Already blacks outnumber whites by more than twelve to one. Whether it is two to one or 12 to one makes no difference in a one-man one-

vote election. Therefore population planning as a form of imperialistic, capitalistic, racial suppression, has no logical or scientific basis.

With the present growth curve, demands on health, housing, food, education and employment, are in excess of supply, and the situation is worsening. Demand greater than supply boosts inflation, which in turn aggravates poverty even further. It is a vicious cycle. Only a firm political statement of intent and action, can break this cycle. It will require a brave man to do it, but if successful, he will go down in history as the man who brought progress and prosperity. People will become independent of, rather than dependent on the State.

B) Farming Methods:

Farming methods must become scientific and conservative. Namibia is virtually only suited to livestock and game farming. The delicate ecological symbiosis must be nurtured for future generations.

C) Political Settlement

(AG8 and Resolution 435):

The guerrilla war can only be terminated by a political settlement. It is often said that Namibia must decide its own future, but to most who have followed the political yo-yo game, it is obvious that outside sources from a number of sides are manipulating our future. A settlement will hopefully bring peace, stability, investment and prosperity.

D) Good Medical Services:

Good medical services must go hand in hand with education and economic progress.

E) Political Independence:

Political independence depends on economic independence. Namibia's resources must be developed by Namibians for Namibia, with help if necessary. Presently symptoms and not causes are treated. This only postpones a solution until it becomes insurmountable.

Man has been able to control all other forms of life but not himself. One of the few people still in harmony with nature is the Kalahari bushman. He sets an excellent example of live and let live, unlike the suicidal lemmings of the Antarctic.

You don't help a poor man by giving him a fish, but by showing him how to catch a fish. The aim should be independence not hand-out nurtured dependence.

**CONCERNED CITIZEN
WINDHOEK**