

# Yes we CAN feed all those starving children

## It just needs some REAL changes

IN THE last few decades, a number of myths about population size or what is otherwise referred to as the population explosion, have developed and become generally accepted:

- Third World countries are poor because they have high birth rates.
- A reduction in the population growth rate is the answer to Third World development.
- Third World people have big families because they don't know better.
- There will soon be more people in the world than can be fed.
- Since the Third World holds the largest population, it is the Third World population that is using up the largest proportion of the world's resources.

How are these myths used in South Africa?

To quote the HSRC "Without a reduction in the present rate of growth in population numbers, we have little, if any, hope of success in directing the material living conditions of the population along the right channels."

This view blames the poverty of the average South African on the size of its families. Looking at South Africa's history we find the real causes. Economic processes set in motion with colonialism removed people's rights to the land on which they lived and worked to produce food for their own livelihoods — it systematically excluded African producers from the markets on which they were dependent for selling their products — it forced men off their land because they were needed to labour in the mines, and later in other industries.

This undermined the ability of these people to continue their food production, while they provided the labour that produced the gold on which our country's wealth rests — wealth which went to the colonial-



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ists and not to the workers themselves.

A history of incredible industrial growth and prosperity for those who took control, and of steadily increasing suffering in terms of health, family life, and general social welfare for the majority. This is the process of poverty.

In 1972, Black mothers in rural South Africa had an average of 6.5 children. White mothers in the O.F.S. had an average of 6.2 children. Of the 6.5 Black children just over half survived. Of the 6.2 white children, 6 survived.

It is not the number of children in a community that determines its infant mortality rate. Rather, it is the position of the community in that society that determines this.

Some are protected by our country's politico-economic structure, and those without political or economic rights are also deprived of the right to health, and in this case, of the right to life.

For the average middle class South African family today, it is common to consider the costs of rearing a child before deciding how many to have. These costs include everything from nappies to dentists to holidays to university. And there are no necessary returns.

The grown child, an expensive product, then leaves and goes off to start the process again. But for many people in South Africa, this logic does not hold. For them, another child means only another mouth to feed in terms of costs, and this is really a marginal difference in relation to the expected returns.

As soon as that child can walk, she or he will contribute to the family, be it in assisting in the housework, or in herding cows.

In an urban setting, the child may sell newspapers or do odd jobs to bring back some income to the family. By taking over housework, children allow their parents to leave the house in search of paid work, the more adults able to find jobs, the more chance of eating.

But even more importantly, we live in a country where pensions, sick pay, and social security benefits in general are hard if not impossible to come by. In this situation, old people rely totally on their children to support them in their old age. Thus it is a rational choice for the black working class to have many children. Only when our social and economic structures are different will this change.

Social research on this subject shows that when people's standard

'Of 6.5 children just over half survived.'

THE RECENT announcement by Colgate Palmolive and the Chemical Workers Industrial Union that they had agreed to a settlement of the dispute for Union recognition represents a major victory for the workers' struggle in South Africa.

After a 16 month battle, management has been forced to concede the principle of in-plant negotiations over wages and working conditions. It has dropped its demand that the Union enter the Industrial Council, an idea central not only to its own strategy for restricting workers' rights, but also to the programme of organised capital and the state.

The Colgate dispute represented a test case: the centrepiece of the new state/management industrial relations strategy had been directly challenged and overturned.

As one worker representative insisted at a FOSATU shop stewards council in the midst of the dispute, "If Colgate workers win, we all win. If they lose, we all lose".

The Chemical Workers Industrial Union, backed by FOSATU, developed a two-pronged strategy against the Colgate management. Firstly, a Conciliation Board was appointed which allowed for the

# Colgate workers win recognition after legal strike action

calling of a legal strike 30 days after negotiations had become deadlocked. Secondly, and immediately after deadlock had been reached, a boycott of Colgate products was called by FOSATU. Management was now faced with a near certain strike and a growing consumer boycott.

In addition, FOSATU used its links with the international trade union movement to apply secondary pressure on Colgate overseas. At the time of Colgate's capitulation to its workers, efforts were underway in Britain, United States and Spain to bring pressure to bear on Colgate in those countries.

But, the main struggle was in South Africa itself. Here the 30 day "cooling off" period insisted upon

by the law was used to build up solidarity both inside and outside the factory. Lunchtime meetings were held by Colgate workers in the factory canteen in open breach of factory rules, where songs and slogans were devised. Meetings with other FOSATU unions were arranged, a strike levy was proposed, and a strike ballot was held at which only four of the eligible workers voted "no".

At the same time, the boycott of Colgate products got underway and began to bite in the two weeks before the planned strike. Pamphlets and stickers were circulated and plastered over many commercial and industrial areas. Colgate workers addressed meetings during Republic Day "celebrations" and

on June 16th. Nurses', taxi drivers', shopkeepers' and civic associations were approached to pledge their support. Many did: shopkeepers in some areas began removing Colgate products from their shelves, and workers advised Colgate salesmen to stay away from their area until a settlement had been reached.

Most effective of all, were the activities of other FOSATU affiliates. Shop Steward councils met in FOSATU 'locals' all over South Africa to affirm their solidarity with the Colgate workers struggle. Workers in the 6000 strong Volkswagen factory at Uitenhage, in the 2000 strong Salcast factory in Benoni, in the 1500 strong Alusaf factory in Richards Bay, and in many other plants, stuck Colgate boycott

stickers to their overalls as they reported to work. Trucks and buses driven by Transport and General Workers Union members were covered with pamphlets and stickers.

Management objected, but the workers would not budge, and particularly in the East Rand, employers became increasingly apprehensive of a general sympathy strike.

Colgate is alleged to have responded by giving out free samples of products in the township and embarking on a massive advertising campaign. This had limited effect: workers redoubled their efforts; supermarkets were "stickered"; schoolchildren gave out pamphlets and are reported to have stoned a Colgate vehicle distributing free samples in Duduza township on the East Rand.

In this context of mounting militancy, and with the prospect of a massive escalation of internal and overseas pressure should the strike take place, Colgate management backed down. Managements' unity on the issue of Industrial Councils had been temporarily broken, and a bridgehead for the further extension of workers rights had been won.



'infant mortality rates of 250 per 1000 and a norm of under nutrition for the majority'

of living improves, the size of their families decreases.

Our problem is not a problem of population but one of poverty. One of the State's researchers writes, "if the present growth rate in population is maintained, the limits of agricultural production and of food supply in South Africa will be reached sooner than the world in general . . . An awareness of the costs involved in our population explosion is now much in evidence," Here again we have a calculation of available resources through a comparison between population growth rate and GNP.

The Sanlam Economic Research Department projected that South Africa would have one of the highest growth rates in the industrialized world this year. Yet we witness infant mortality rates as high as 250 per 1000 and a norm of under-nutrition for the majority of our people. Were wealth indeed divided equally amongst the people, there would no longer be a food crisis; there would no longer appear to be a population crisis.

What is the present situation with food in South Africa? The relationship between population increase, food increase and the demand for

food from 1953 to 1972 was as follows:

- The annual increase in population was 2,4%
- The annual increase in food production was 3,9%
- The annual increase in demand for food was 3,2%.

In other words more food was produced than was needed to feed the population. In the case of cereal in particular, the annual increase in cereal production was 5% and the annual increase in demand for cereal production was 2,2%. There is no shortage of food here.

So why the poverty? Because an increase in food production doesn't imply an increased availability of food. There are two specific aspects to this contradiction. They are:

- the export of food and the control of local prices by marketing boards.
- Between 1970 and 1975 South Africa's exports of agricultural products more than doubled.
- Its export of food, animal, fish and fishery products trebled.
- Its food imports in 1975 were a quarter as much as exports, and almost all of a luxury quality.

In other words, South Africa is

exporting food because people in South Africa can't afford to pay for it.

Why they can't afford to is apparently not the government's or industry's business. The cost of food in South Africa is high. It is high because prices of basic foods are controlled by market control boards whose interests are those of the producers not the consumers.

We have witnessed the dumping of milk, stockpiling of butter and the adding of dried eggs to stock feed, all to maintain a situation of apparent scarcity so that prices remain high and this in a country with such high rates of malnutrition.

The recent hike in the price of maize is the most immediate example of a food policy which is concerned with profit and not with people. South Africa has produced a record crop of maize, easily enough to feed its population. But the maize board and government have decided otherwise. South Africa has been exporting maize at a loss. The board has decided to raise the consumer cost of maize to make up for their loss. So, even less people will be able to buy the food that constitutes their staple diet.

The rise in the price of maize will

push up the price of mealie meal by at least 10 percent and will have a ripple effect on other food prices. The head of the Maize Board said that of this bumper crop, 6.1 million tons would be needed for local consumption and the surplus would be just over 7 million. In other words, were we living in a just society where resources were not controlled by a few at the expense of the majority, South Africa could provide ample food for the entire population.

And then they tell us that the size of our population causes its poverty.

It is important to spell out, the practical implications of the population scare. Contraception, in itself, is potentially a great liberator for women and people in general.

It allows people the right to control their bodies.

The right to decide how many children they want, if any the right to look after their health.

But it is not always used with this in mind. In order to fulfill a positive function, contraception must be provided in a very specific way —

- women must be given as many choices as possible in types of contraceptives.



Population size is not the problem

- they must be given detailed information about the health hazards of many of these contraceptives and
- they must be given thorough physical checkups to determine which contraceptives best suit their physical makeup.

To give such a service, contraception must be provided within a wider framework of preventative health care rather than in exclusive, so-called, "Family Planning" clinics where the goal is population control. Here the norm is the physical exploitation of women. This occurs on two levels.

Firstly, internationally, we witness the dumping of contraceptives which are considered dangerous for use in the States and Western Europe. And also, experimentation with new types of contraceptives takes place all over the Third World, exposing thousands of women to unknown and often potentially lethal dangers.

Secondly, in South Africa, the state has made population control a number one priority. State clinics carry very few different contraceptives, and it is widely known that contraceptives are administered without concern for the physical well-being or the personal needs of the woman concerned.

And all of this in South Africa where we have shown population size not to be the problem. The problem is poverty and all its social consequences.

The cause lies in South Africa's colonial history — the building of wealth in the hands of a few through the labour of the majority. And so the situation remains today. The problem of poverty will only be solved through fundamental changes in the social, political and economic structures of our country.

■ Extracts from a speech by Barbara Klugman.

A Newcastle man, Mr Joseph Gumbi 24 was sentenced to five years imprisonment under the Terrorism Act in a Durban Regional Court last month.

After sentence was passed Mr Gumbi turned to the court and raised his fist and cried "Amandla". He was then handed his one year old child by his mother to say goodbye to while his wife sat and wept.

The two other charges facing Mr Gumbi of furthering the aims of communism and attempting to defeat the aims of justice were dropped.

Before sentence was passed, the defence counsel, Mr P Langa addressed the court and said that the magistrate should take into account that Mr Gumbi did not have the constitutional means for promoting change open to him and that he was only attempting to obtain information on the options open to him.

He said that Mr Gumbi had written many letters to different people trying to get information. "He was looking for a way out of his situation but had not yet made up his mind what to do. He is now on his way to jail but still he does not have a solution and leaves behind grieving fam-

# Gumbi sentenced to five years under Terrorism Act

ily and friends," Mr Langa told the court.

The magistrate after finding Mr Gumbi guilty of inciting people to leave the country and undergo military training accepted the request by the prosecutor, Mr M.G. Roberts, that the minimum sentence of five years be imposed. Mr. P. J. du Plessis said in passing sentence that the aspects that favoured the accused was that he was still young and that he "was only at the stage of preparation."

"The court must impose a sentence which will hurt the accused and warn others of the consequences if they commit these offences," Plessis said.

The state's case against Mr Gumbi rested on two letters written by the accused to the defence number of state witnesses, statement made by Mr Gumbi

his detention before a Newcastle magistrate on October 1, 1980.

The two letters were written to Radio Freedom, the broadcasting station for the African National Congress.

The first letter was written on August 20, 1980 where he wrote "I am prepared to fight for a black freedom. I wish to enquire as to what I should do should I wish to join "Umkhonto-We-Sizwe". I am also enquiring as to how to contact you should I wish to leave the country. I am saying this because I am tired of the boere regime and its apartheid. Power to the people."

The second letter on October 6, 1980 was written in response to an article which appeared in Drum magazine which contained allegations made by a man who left South Africa to undergo military training and then subsequently returned.

The letter stated, "In the name of the liberation struggle I send you this article which I think if the claims contained in it are true will discourage many would-be -umkhonto-we-sizwe guerillas — like myself. Will you please explain what the conditions really are in the camps? Ours in the struggle."

The accused's statement, which was accepted by the magistrate was contested by the defence who argued that it was not made of his own free will and that he had been assaulted by the police. When asked by the defence why he made the statement, Mr Gumbi said "I could not do otherwise in the situation." He added that he would not have made it had he not been assaulted. He told the court that he was handcuffed, blindfolded with a wet cloth and an elastic band was tied around his penis and was forced through

kicking and hitting to do frog jumps. He lost consciousness and when he came around he was lying wet on the floor from being splashed with water and from his own urine. He also told the court how he was held out of the fourth floor window of the police station with his head pointing downwards.

When he was questioned as to why he did not tell the magistrate, Mr Gumbi said, "I was afraid because I knew that the police would victimise me. They accompanied me to the magistrate and stood at the office door."

In the summing up of the state's evidence one witness Mr Bongani Mpanza was singled out as a good witness, by the prosecutor who said that many of the other witnesses had not been satisfactory. Mr Mpanza told the court how the accused had given him a lift into Newcastle and forced him to learn the words of freedom songs through hitting him on the shoulders. One witness Stanley M. Zwane told the court that he had been assaulted by the police.

The defence has lodged an appeal against the judgement and sentence of Joseph Gumbi and are making a bail application.