



RHODESIA'S TRIBAL AREAS

**The need for rapid economic
expansion**

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To appreciate the need for rapid economic expansion in Rhodesia's tribal areas it must be understood that in Rhodesia the two major races, the African and the European, each have their own portions of the country. In the African or tribal areas African land interests are paramount, and, likewise, in the European area European land interests are paramount. Nevertheless about half the African population works and lives in the "European" area.

This principle has operated successfully since 1930. In essence it is merely the extension of a common trait of mankind whereby people of the same national, spiritual and cultural background identify themselves as distinctive groups and tend to congregate as groups, in their own separate localities.

In Rhodesia the areas are defined and this has not only precluded friction between the races, but has led to a state of mutual respect which has ensured racial tranquillity; friction which would otherwise happen if the one race sought to intrude into the area of the other race. This situation has already arisen in white populated countries, where Asian, Indian, African and other coloured people have been accepted as immigrants and have intruded themselves upon the residential areas of the white population.

When the Europeans first occupied Rhodesia in 1890 there were less than half a million Africans scattered over various parts of the country in small tribal groups generally under a loose form of control administered through a hierarchy of independent chiefs.

The policy of successive European Governments in Rhodesia has sought to preserve this tribal structure and to incorporate it in the over-all administration of the tribal areas.

The new Republican Constitution recently adopted by Rhodesia has gone a step further and this traditional structure now has direct representation in Parliament.

The Tribal Trust Land is divided into approximately 230 areas of various sizes and populations, where each traditional group has its own area and chief, and here members of the group, in accordance with the customs of their tribe, occupy and use the land free of charge.

According to tribal custom the chief holds the area in trust for his people, each of whom is entitled to a building site for his family, an arable area for cultivation by the family if available and use of the uncultivated land for grazing his livestock.

So we have a man, his wife and family with their own little home; their right to use a piece of land for growing crops and a commonage shared with other families for livestock grazing.

The families are grouped in small villages under the control of the senior member recognized by them as the head of the village. The area occupied by a group of such villages comes under the control of a headman, whose appointment derives from hereditary succession in accordance with tribal custom. The headman, his people and their area come under the direction of the chief of the tribal group who also inherits his position in accordance with tribal custom.

It is Government policy to encourage and promote local government in the tribal areas. Accordingly, the tribal leaders are encouraged to persuade their people to form local government bodies in the form of African Councils, and it is policy that all tribal areas should eventually have their own local authorities.

However the tribesmen, while eager to accept the benefits which flow from advancement, are loath to accept any change which requires conscious effort on their part. Because the establishment of local authorities is dependent upon the will of the people it will take some time to implement this policy.

But change must come, and one factor which makes this imperative is the population growth of the African people.

In 1890, we have said, the African population was less than half a million. In 80 years because of medical services and because tribal warfare has been brought to an end, they have multiplied more than ten-fold until today there are nearly five million. In 20 years it is estimated that the present figure will double.

Sixty-three per cent. of Africans live in the tribal areas. At present about 700 000 male adults are in employment outside the Tribal Trust Lands. African male school leavers are in excess of 40 000 each year.

The employment figure, although static for some years, is beginning to rise but it is still unable to meet the potential number of job seekers. This surplus population can sustain itself through agriculture in the tribal areas—but the emphasis is on the word "sustain". There is insufficient suitable land for each male African to be a full-time farmer in the tribal areas and it is quite obvious that industry must be developed in the tribal areas in order that the increasing number of work-seekers can be absorbed.

In recent years great strides have been made in the development of tribal irrigation schemes but no matter how many irrigation schemes are introduced (and their number must of course be limited) the number of plottolders will never keep up with the population growth. Likewise in the dryland agricultural sphere great strides have been made in increasing the output of crops such as cotton in the tribal areas but, again, there must be an optimum.

In the long term then, there must be industrialization in the tribal areas to complement the progress being achieved in all aspects of agriculture.

The tribal African is said to live at subsistence level. This is true inasmuch as the majority only produce sufficient food for their own needs but as they are supplied at low cost with schools, clinics, dams, boreholes, bridges, beer-halls and travelling cinemas, the claim that the tribesmen live at subsistence level in Rhodesia cannot be justified. Ever since the Occupation, the African has been supplied with these facilities at little or no cost to himself. As the population increases the African must learn to play his part in the provision of services within his areas.

This change can only be brought about by a change of attitude on his part and his desire to move into a cash economy. He must therefore be forced by economics to want to earn more. He must be induced to raise his standards whether it be in the construction of his house, his health and hygiene or the improvement of his herd. His yield per hectare must be increased by the use of fertilizers, his cotton kept clean by using pesticides.

If the African is to earn more there must be the opportunity for him to do so and it is clear that this cannot be attained solely by the provision of bigger and better irrigation schemes or by increasing the crop productivity. It is for this reason that Government, in January 1969, formed the Tribal Trust Land Development Corporation, a statutory body, known as Tilcor.

The chairman of Tilcor has said that his corporation's prime aim "must be the creation of employment opportunities in industrial and commercial concerns established within the tribal areas to absorb the crushing annual increase of African workseekers".

Tilcor's difficulty to date has been to persuade the entrepreneur that it is in his interest to establish his business in the Tribal Trust Lands. So far three industrial enterprises have agreed to do this in tribal areas close to the main centres in the country. In addition the corporation has bought equity in a number of companies, all of which will establish themselves in the tribal areas during the next few years.

Progress in the tribal areas since the Occupation 80 years ago has been based on the development of agriculture. The time has now come when this progress must be extended to the industrial and commercial field.

With the exploding African birthrate the rapid economic expansion of the tribal areas must continue if Rhodesians of all races are to maintain the impetus of development which is now taking place.