

African Children Going Hungry Despite Export of Food Surpluses

Potgietersrus, South Africa (UPI)—African tots with bloated stomachs and stick-like legs stand quietly in line to collect their relief rations.

Each holds out a scrawny hand for a slice of bread and peanut butter and a quantity of fortified meal, taken as a drink resembling thin cereal. They squat on their haunches to gulp down the charity

handout. On red letter days, the African and European helpers of the local relief committee hand out sour lemons as well.

Three successive poor harvests in the Northern Transvaal have made the quiet line of thin-cheeked children a common sight here.

The hunger in this prosperous, tree-shaded little town

is only part of a problem which extends for 15,000 square miles from the Bechuanaland border in the northwest to the Sekhukuneland African reserve in the south-east.

Crops have failed and the hot sun has turned once rich grazing land into dry, withered veld. Malnutrition is chronic among Africans in

this part of the world. But the drying out of the countryside has brought the threat of real famine.

A spokesman for the relief committee here said some of the children hike five miles to collect their meager ration.

"At home some of them are only fed every second day," he said.

South African government officials deny there is any starvation among Africans in the Northern Transvaal or anywhere else.

"There is no famine in South Africa," Agricultural, Economics and Marketing

Secretary S. J. J. De Swardt said recently.

"It is a known fact that all foodstuffs are readily available in the country," he said. "In any of the rural areas a family is able to cultivate a large variety of victuals right where they live."

In special cases of prolonged drought or failure of the crops, De Swardt said, "the

state has always taken special measures to ensure that no persons, irrespective of race, should suffer through famine."

One group of European professional, religious and business leaders apparently is not convinced that these special measures entirely meet the problem.

They have formed a non-

profit making corporation to sell South Africa's growing food surpluses to needy whites and non-whites, as cheaply as possible.

They point to the fact that South Africa has a surplus of 24 million pounds of butter and 8 million pounds of cheese. The country will export this year 28 million pounds of corn, the staple diet

of the Africans. The pilot plan starts this month.

Meanwhile the children stand in line in Potgietersrus. The relief committee, which has received \$12,600 from the South African government and other money from voluntary contributions, reckon their funds will last until the end of August.

MEDFORD, N.J., TRIBUNE
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