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FOOD COMES IN WHEN HITLER GOES OUT

(From a Radio Talk by DR. R. M. CAMPBELL, of the New Zealand High Commissioner's staff, London)

I AM asked to say something of the Relief and Rehabilitation Conference at Atlantic City which four of us, Geoffrey Cox, Professor Allan, Bruce Turner and I have recently attended for New Zealand. What I say must be incomplete and more personal than official, for officially our report goes to our Government; but perhaps there are some things I can say in advance of that report. In some ways this Conference was the same as, in part it overlapped with, the meeting held six months ago at Hot Springs. Both were concerned with food. Both showed clearly the need; and this is a matter of first concern to us in New Zealand—the need for more production of food if the world's needs are to have any hope of being met.

Needless to say, there are other problems besides just producing more. We have not such short memories as to forget altogether how things stood, say, 10 years ago when farmers could produce in abundance but the stuff could not be sold, and this, not because the need was lacking, but because there was some hitch between those who could produce and those who wanted to consume. Here we will not go over that, except to say that the need for sensible organisation to prevent a return of such evils is recognised.

Victory, Then Relief

The difference between the two Conferences I imagine listeners know well enough. Hot Springs was concerned with long-term plans to match food consumption with food production by improving standards of living in all countries. The Atlantic City Conference has been concerned with the short-term—the year or two just ahead; that is to say, with the relief period, and its special concern is with countries that are the victims of the war. Let me put this Conference in its setting by recalling a couple of earlier items. In August of 1940, Winston Churchill declared: "We can and we will arrange in advance for the speedy entry of food into any part of the enslaved areas when this part has been wholly cleared of German Forces and has regained its freedom. We shall do our best to encourage the building up of reserves of food all over the world so that it will always be held up before the eyes of the people of Europe, including, I say it deliberately, the German and Austrian people, that the shattering of the Nazi power will bring to them all immediate food, freedom, and peace."

Those are Mr. Churchill's words, and in August a year later, 1941, in generous words written as a bridge while the war was on, the Atlantic Charter spoke of meeting the needs on equal terms of all states, great or small, victor or vanquished. In the spirit of these promises more than two years ago, the Governments of Great Britain and the Dominions, New Zealand and the others, and of our Allies, set up in London the Inter-Allied Post-War Requirements Committee, known for short by the name of its chairman, as the Leith Ross

Committee. Between then and now it has done good, steady work building up estimates of requirements, country for country, for such necessities as medicines, foodstuffs, clothing, machinery, and so forth.

The work in London touched only one aspect of the problem, that is, requirements, and it covered only Europe, not the Soviet Union, China or other areas that will still have to be covered. Now this new Conference in Atlantic City has brought in all countries, and it has made a start on the tasks of obtaining and financing supplies and set up in some detail the organisation for tackling these tasks. It was a good Conference. It was marked by a sense of urgency, by an anxiety to co-operate. When some differences in outlook were shown there was a readiness to look at things from the other man's viewpoint. There was frankness in discussion, and altogether one could reasonably say that compromises were made fairly acceptable to everyone.

Practical Arrangements

The next thing is the practical problem—to arrange for supplies and for their transport. This task is given to a special committee on supplies on which New Zealand is to have a member. The Committee is to start work in Washington almost at once. It will be one of the most important committees working with the central organisation. We have also an interest in the financial arrangements—in finding our share of the cost. What perhaps strikes one as strange at first—it certainly struck me that way—is the really very small number of unoccupied countries that can pay or can be expected to contribute. When you have named Great Britain and the Empire, and the United States, and South and Central America, that is all, and it is a short list. The recommendation is that all countries contribute one per cent of their national income. For New Zealand that would probably mean something between two and three million pounds—no small sum even in these days. How much it will pay, each country, each Government or legislature, is to decide for itself; but one per cent is the basis recommended.

I have mentioned money, and we know it is important. It does not grow on trees. Even so, what is more important is the physical production of the goods, the food, and the actual withdrawal for relief. It is the beginning of wisdom in economic matters to look through money to the underlying realities. Will we in New Zealand, in America, in other comparatively happily placed lands, will we share what we have in order to help others? The intention is that most of the money, say 90 per cent, that each country agrees to contribute, should be spent in buying goods or services in that country. Ten per cent—10 per cent of one per cent of our total income, remember—we are asked to make available in a form that can be spent outside our country.

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