

SECOND CARNEGIE INQUIRY INTO POVERTY
AND DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Wupperthal - Thoughts and
projections on rural development

by

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SUMMARY

This paper comprises a report on the progress of the Wupperthal Rural Development Project; it also contains thoughts concerning the outcome of the Project to date. It concludes by urging the need for action in extending and increasing such rural projects, and suggests a manner in which this proposal may, to a greater or lesser extent, be realized.

I RATIONALE:

A development project was begun at Wupperthal in 1982 under the auspices of the Moravian Church of SA, who own the village. It has as its long-term goal the development of Wupperthal along the path of self-sufficiency.

It starts from the initial premise that the problem of poverty in South Africa - and the task of combating it - lies primarily in the rural areas. The problems are unemployment, lack of work-places, lack of forward mobility, and agricultural stagnation. Consequently we have urban migration, resulting in poverty, over-crowding and a lower quality of life in urban areas. Concomitantly we have what might be described as a 'brain-drain' from the rural areas, and the tempo of rural poverty is increased one notch. And the wheel turns again.

Current national decentralization plans come nowhere near to solving these problems. In fact they hardly address the problem as it stands. Decentralization as it now exists is more concerned with industry, with economic output, than with people. They will simply give rise to new urban pockets of wealth. The technology they involve, because of cost and the present political dispensations, will always remain out of the hands of the masses of rural poor, who will migrate to these new

centres as they did to the old. This might serve to relieve pressures in certain urban areas but will increase poverty in the country. Rural poverty, and the impoverishment of the land itself, will grow because there is not envisaged any development of the people in terms of education towards pride, initiative, responsibility. The viability of the future cannot be impressed upon people who are not given an opportunity to take control of their own lives, of their own potential, to be masters of their own assets and community; who are seen as labour potential for a technological machine which has little relevance to their own immediate situations.

The feeling behind this project was that, in order to be at all relevant, it must, in E F Schumacher's coinage, be appropriate. The area had to be researched and understood before an appropriate organization and direction of the project could be ascertained. After this had been done, it was decided that the correct strategy to adopt would be to help people form themselves into co-operative enterprises, for co-operatives embody the concepts of participation, control and responsibility. The long-term goal of the Project, apart from the revitalization of Wupperthal itself, is contained in the following words by D H Wright (1): "Since our long-term goal is to prove that locally controlled co-operative enterprises provide a more permanent solution to employment problems than other proposals, it needs to be shown by direct action, that such a proposition is practical."

II THE SITUATION:

Wupperthal lies 300km north of Cape Town, in an isolated region of the Cedarberg mountains. Its nearest 'neighbour' is the town of Clanwilliam, 80km away over bad mountain road. It is an extreme area in all senses: in terms of its roughness, isolation, climate and beauty.

Wupperthal is far more than a village, however. It is a vast tract of mountain land, 38 000 morgen in extent. Wupperthal

the village is the focal point of the area; it has a population of nine hundred, the only bus service, higher-primary school and post office, and the only factories. It has the only shop, the only clinic and the Church's activities are centred here. But the Wupperthal farm as a whole has a population of 2 500, scattered over 12 outlying villages (or 'outstations') of varying size which nestle in hidden valleys and perch on rocky ridges. The possibilities for work in these villages are purely agricultural. The main form of transport in the area is donkey-cart; in fact donkeys form the main source of power generally. Cash crops in these outstations include beans and potatoes, although the main and most lucrative crop is rooibos tea, for which the area is well-known. Home-gardens, both in the Wupperthal village and in the outstations, are superbly cultivated and a source of pride, as well as of self-sufficiency with regard to vegetables. Small-stock farming (mainly goats) also keeps the villagers relatively self-sufficient with regard to meat.

Wupperthal was founded in 1830 by the Rhenish Mission Society and was intended to function as a self-sufficient brotherhood of Christians. It must here be stated, for the sake of clarity, that the population of Wupperthal consists entirely of coloured people, abhorrent though that term might be.

Under the missionaries Wupperthal developed and prospered. It not only reached a point of economic self-sufficiency but actually managed to fund many of the Rhenish Mission Societies activities elsewhere, including its expansion into South West Africa. Its main activities in those days - i.e. the last half of the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries - were the tanning of leather, the manufacture of shoes, the growing of chewing tobacco ('roltabak'), calabashes, wheat and rye and the milling of the latter. Rooibos tea was also sold, but it was not so much cultivated as picked wild from the veld.

In 1965 the Rhenish Mission Society curtailed its activities in South Africa and Wupperthal was passed into the keeping of

the Moravian Church of South Africa. This Church was originally also a missionary Church, but it had gained its independence to become a self-governing South African Church, although it maintains close ties with the German Moravian Movement.

The Church's leadership in Wuppertal had always comprised two aspects, the spiritual and the secular. Soon after the Moravian Church's take-over it was recognized that ministers had largely lost the resourceful economic lifestyle of the early missionaries and that nothing had arisen to replace this role; ministers were simply not economically competent enough to deal with the secular and financial aspects of the Wuppertal situation. So control of all the economic aspects of Wuppertal was handed over to a private entrepreneur. This entrepreneur's activities were originally funded by the Church; however he proceeded to exploit the situation until he left 18 years later, in 1982. Certain developments did take place during his time: a glove factory was started and rapidly expanded, and electricity was supplied for the factories, the shop, the school and the Church. However the financial profit generated during his years there was never seen by the Wuppertal community, and his exploitation of a largely captive workforce resulted in an embittered and confused community.

His leaving left the Moravian Church with the problem of Wuppertal once again. It was then decided to embark on a development project which would aim at developing the community in the direction of self-sufficiency, in order that the solution of Wuppertal's problems might begin to evolve out of the community itself. The author of this paper was put in charge of this project, which began in May 1982.

III THE PROBLEM:

Wuppertal is not poverty stricken in the ways that many other rural areas are. There is no starvation here; no malnutrition. The land is capable of supporting the people on a subsistence

level. There is a cash flow, even if much of the money is sent in from relatives working in Cape Town. There is an extremely small degree of illiteracy, and this mostly among the oldest inhabitants.

Yet the people are poor, and the land is hard. In the out-stations many are simply subsisting. Many men and women have to leave to do seasonal work on neighbouring white-owned farms. The land is becoming impoverished through overgrazing and indiscriminate wood-felling. There is about the place an air of gloom, of despair. There is no sense of a future, of the possibility of creating one. Urban migration increases each year, and so the talent and youth so necessary for the revitalization of the area is drained away, leaving the situation more desperate than ever. Far from being self-sufficient, as it once was, Wupperthal is now bankrupt and relies on the Church for its continued existence. This is essentially what makes it of so much importance to discussions on poverty and development, for we have here a situation which we find throughout this country; namely, the degradation of a rural area to the point of non-viability, leading to increasing poverty of land and people, urban migration and consequent pressure on urban areas, and a sapping of the strength needed to put up a fight against poverty.

Wupperthal is important to a discussion on development for two reasons. First, it is owned by the Moravian Church and consequently falls outside of the strict limits of the Group Areas Act. It is not that independent that one could build a casino there, but it does allow for a unique opportunity to develop models and demonstrations of success outside of the stringent laws which this Act embodies. The same goes for all the Moravian rural stations. Access to land and to markets, participation in group endeavours and co-operative services and the chance to play economic leadership roles are the peculiar, if still limited, opportunities open to members of Moravian villages.

Second, the land and the people are not yet that poverty stricken that a development project would be obliged to make use of all its resources simply to attain, for the villagers, a level of subsistence; on the contrary, the area has reached that point in its existence where it stands balanced precariously, stands before a cross-roads, as it were, and can thus provide an example and pilot-study for other rural areas either in its rise to a measure of self-sustaining development or in its fall towards disintegration.

It is in fact disintegrating; yet it has inherent in its circumstances the possibility of renewal, of revitalization. It is precisely for these reasons that Wupperthal, although not entirely typical of Third World areas or their problems, can stand as an example, as a case-study, of the potential of development in the Third World regions of South Africa.

Wupperthal has led a protected and, to a certain degree, a privileged life over the years. The missionaries guided, supported, sheltered the people for almost one and a half centuries. It is only in the last twenty years that it has been exploited and embittered. The area has never been politically assaulted or economically drained - at least not until recently. Yet it is dying, disintegrating. Where does the essence of the problem lie?

The missionaries carried out an admirable work, in their own way. If not for them, it is almost certain that this community would not have existed at all. They have fostered the growth of a gentle, religious, basically happy and, in the best sense of the word, well-bred people. Yet they were never able to move out of a paternalistic and colonial role. And so the people, essentially peasant folk, remained in the role of children, for they always had a father figure to rule them, and that father figure determined their own image of themselves. The coming of the white entrepreneur - and in fact his leaving as well - confirmed for them their own helplessness, their lack of internal leadership.

These folk, in their day-to-day living, are extremely resourceful. They are 'survival artists' (2). It is unlikely that many of us in the First World could survive on the amount of money which serves the Wupperthaler. It is also unlikely that technologically and financially sophisticated urban centres will survive a real resources, or ecological, crisis as well as would Wupperthal. There is here, implicit in the situation, a strength, a power which can wrest survival from out of the most obstinate circumstances. There is also what may be termed a raw intelligence. It is good to know these things, important to know what one can use, what resources exist for a development project. But there is something else as well.

In Paulo Friere's work, 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed'(3) he describes the culture of silence of the dispossessed which he discovered through his work with poor people in Latin America; a state of lethargy. This is in essence what we find in Wupperthal itself. It is true that Wupperthal is isolated, that much knowledge is lacking, contact with modernity, with 'progress', with finance. Yet the real problem, whether it results partly from these things or not, is the apathy, the silence, the sense of helplessness, the feeling of inferiority. These people actually do regard themselves as second-class citizens; often in fact as second-class people. This appears to be due partly to South Africa's socio-political history and present socio-political dispensations, and partly also to the over-protective and imposing role which the missionary church has played over they years.

But whatever the reasons, the facts remain. Wupperthal has a primary-school; it has two factories and a tannery; its lands are mountaineous and rocky but sufficient nevertheless - are in fact coveted by more than one neighbouring farmer; it has adequate water, if not rainfall, in the rivers which flow down from the mountains. Most important of all, Wupperthal belongs to the Wupperthalers, in the sense at least that they are all members of the Moravian Church and community. This represents a privileged situation in the South African context,

and provokes a feeling of independence. In spite of all this however, independence, self-reliance, is precisely what is lacking.

An educational and re-socializing process is necessary here to equip people to face the realities of their situation, to be able to appraise it critically and to respond to it adequately. Education and socialization for independence. Silent apathy must be changed into vocal action.

This is, naturally, a sensitive issue. It is presumptuous to come in from the First World and profess to 'develop' the situation. There is in this community a sense of social cohesion - of family, brotherhood, call it what you will - which stands in direct contrast to many of the alienating effects produced by the modern urban environment. There is much that the Wupperthal situation can teach, and one should not assume that one has all the answers. Nevertheless, the rush towards the disintegration and unviability of this community must be checked; the 'brain-drain' from rural areas to the cities must be turned if poverty in the country - and in the cities, for that matter - is not to increase. Somehow, personal independence and self-reliance must be achieved without destroying the unity, the coherence of the community as a whole. A sense of individual pride must be developed which will serve to upgrade and emphasize, and not destroy, community development and pride.

This is in fact the significance which the Wupperthal Project holds for rural and Third World poverty in general. For while it is true that many communities lack the basics even for subsistence; while it is true that political dispensations in this country are a major cause of rural poverty; yet is suggested here that, whatever the reasons for it happen to be, the essential dilemma remains that of consciousness. It is not here being suggested that this is the only problem; that people must learn to accept their situation and make the best of it, make do with what they have. On the contrary, it is here proposed that only through the development of an

active and aware consciousness can changes in political dispensations be achieved and, perhaps more important, have any lasting significance. For rural poverty is a world wide phenomenon and not one to be viewed through eyes coloured by unchecked idealism or naivety. In the field, a form of 'realistic idealism', an undefined concept but experientially very real, needs to be cultivated. It is also proposed that while appropriate technology is extremely important in combatting poverty in rural areas, even in allowing for basic survival, it is more important in terms of its educational value, both intellectually and technically and also in the development of a consciousness of self-control over one's life. This is of course always assuming that we are aiming for a forward-perpetuating, self-renewable answer to the problems of rural poverty.

IV THE SOLUTION:

This section should be entitled 'Proposed Solution', for this entire paper is in fact a proposal for action. Whatever has in fact been achieved in Wupperthal is only the tip of the iceberg, both with regard to the region itself and rural poverty in general.

In the light of the above analysis of the Wupperthal situation, it was decided that the best means of achieving the change of consciousness which was recognized as being central to both the problem and the solution, was in the promotion of the growth of co-operative enterprises in Wupperthal.

Co-operatives embody three primary concepts, those of participation, control, and education. In a co-operative, all workers are members and co-owners as well. This principle ensures that by becoming members of co-operatives, and by starting new co-operative ventures, members of this community might gradually begin to perceive themselves as masters of

their own situations, of their assets and of their community - and hopefully would result too in the sense of responsibility which goes with control. This in turn entails the necessity for participation with respect to all workers - co-operatives are democratic institutions which require active participation for them to work. Co-operatives cannot function as such without full participation by worker/members in its affairs; and participation should result in a changing of consciousness from helplessness to a recognition of the possibility and necessity of critical action. Education too is double-edged. Participation and control must have educative effects, and education is necessary in itself to prepare workers for collective ownership if the co-operative ventures are not to collapse on the road to independence.

It was envisaged that all ventures should have a place in their structures for community ownership as well, for this is essentially a community project, and co-operatives have as two of their principles the concepts of the importance of working both with and to the benefit of the community and other co-operatives as well. We are, after all, talking here about the fostering of community self-help. To put projects under the control of members of the community and of the community as a whole is to increase the chance of the eventual emergence of local solutions to the problems of poverty and employment.

The fostering of co-operatives entails two further points. First, it entails participatory democracy as opposed to representative democracy; that is, direct participation as opposed to indirect participation. In practice, most democratic organizations are forced through circumstance to use a combination of representative and participatory democracy (4). Individual projects need to be kept small to ensure the practicality of participatory democracy so that the members' (and the community's) sense of involvement may be encouraged, for it is only involvement which will provide the stimulation for the evolution from apathy to action.

Second, to facilitate psychological involvement it is important that a situation is intelligible. To quote E F Schumacher (5) once again: "When a thing is intelligible you have a sense of involvement; when a thing is unintelligible you have a sense of estrangement." It is precisely this transfer from estrangement to involvement which we are looking for. To achieve intelligibility it is essential that projects start as much as possible from the level of local inhabitants' understanding. It is essential that resources be used in the locations where they are available and that local, comprehensible solutions be sought to the problems of rural poverty. Any other form of attempted aid could have negative results.

Accordingly, the Wuppertal Project was organized around the following co-operative principles, with one or two extra points particularly relevant to rural development.

1. Any economic activity or venture should be owned by its members and have a place in its structure for community - and, in the case of Wuppertal, church - ownership as well
2. The project should be run democratically giving each member an equal say in the decision making process and again allowing for community - and church - representation.
3. Where feasible members should contribute share capital to the project and receive limited interest on that share capital.
4. Whatever net profit is distributed should be on a basis proportional to business or work done by members of the particular project.
5. Whatever profit is not distributed could be utilized in three possible ways: first, it can be put into a reserve fund; second, it can be contributed to the

community or to other similar projects; third, it can be used to pay back outside capital grants. Ultimately it is up to members to decide what proportion of profits should be funnelled into each channel.

6. All ventures should work to the benefit of each other as well as the community.
7. The promotion of education must be a priority - both in terms of members learning to run the activities and in terms of resultant growth in participation and general awareness.
8. The economic viability of each proposed venture must be considered a priority.
9. The local resources of Wupperthal should be carefully gauged and utilized before considering any projects which are not 'indigenous' to the area.

So much for the principles on which this work is based. How is the Project structured?

A number of factors in the Wupperthal scenario were recognized early on. First, that it would take a long time, probably a number of years, before any of the projects reached a semblance of self-reliance and independence. Second, that much education would be required in order to achieve this end. Third, that provision of management and technical services, at least in the beginning, would be necessary for the adequate functioning of the projects, because the inadequacy of such expertise in many co-operatives has been identified as a prime reason for failure. Thus, and also in terms of raising finance, co-operatives need the services of a 'shelter organization' or support body, for they need a rather protective environment if they are to prosper (6). And fourth, there is much research that needs to be done.

So it was decided in the first place to establish a central project office which could service all of the individual

enterprises and around which they could revolve. This office would be staffed by a fieldworker, a book-keeper/clerk, and if necessary a secretary. It would undertake to fulfil all the tasks mentioned above: education, research, technical services, financing and the like. The further advantage of this office was envisaged to be that this kind of centralization would cut down costs and so make more projects viable. Not only would the cost of technical services be shared by enterprises, but where, for example, an enterprise needed the use of a vehicle but could not afford to own one, the central office could ensure that this vehicle was shared amongst the various activities, with each venture contributing towards cost in proportion to use.

The individual enterprises would be structured as co-operatives, and would operate independently but always to the advantage of the other co-operatives and of the community as a whole.

The central office would initially be in a position of leadership, and, apart from the advantages - the necessity - of this situation in getting the project off the ground, this could, if unchecked, lead to the destructive and negative application of power. Therefore monthly meetings would be held. As the individual projects progressed, they would be eligible to send an elected delegate to sit in on these meetings, and to have a say in any decisions taken. It would also be necessary to have delegates from the community and from the Church taking part in this decision-making process, out of which the direction of development would evolve.

It is thus envisaged that the central office too will in time be run on democratic, co-operative lines. It must evolve into a support organization structured as a secondary co-operative, with each individual enterprise, the community and the Church being considered members, as well as the office workers themselves. To as great an extent as possible the emphasis must be on local control.

V ACTION:

The Project has been in existence for one and a half years now, a comparatively short time. What follows is a brief summary of Wupperthal's resources at the start of this Project and what has and has not been achieved.

In the first place, the Central Project Office was set up, with fieldworker and book-keeper/clerk. The clerk, who comes from an outstation close by, has had no high-schooling but has taught himself, through first-hand experience in the past, the rudiments of the trade. He has proved extremely valuable. More will be said of the Project Office later.

THE SHOE FACTORY is well-known throughout South Africa for its hand-made boots and shoes. This was the first industry in Wupperthal, the first trade taught by the missionaries, and is still infused with the old Wupperthal atmosphere. At one time - the 1930's - providing work for 35 men, it had since declined and been declared bankrupt by our entrepreneur one year before the start of the present Project. At this stage it had four workers left, and these workers formed a partnership with the Church which called itself a self-help development project. Unfortunately the workers were not up to self-help without a certain amount of development taking place first, and this was never attempted. Thus at the start of this Project the shoe factory was sliding backwards fast.

The Central Office has managed to halt that backwards slide. The attention which has now been provided to the shoe factory has served to make it economically viable once more, if not particularly profitable. There are nine workers employed now, four of the five new ones being young men. New markets have been probed, a diversified range of footwear produced, and a gratifying new spirit of enthusiasm has entered the factory. The factory is now fully operational once more and could in the near future plan further expansion.

However, most of what has been achieved thus far has been due to the Project Office. The shoe factory still leans on that

office for all its needs, including even the major aspects of floor management. This factory has a long way to go before any semblance of self-reliance can be expected.

THE GLOVE-FACTORY, manufacturing industrial leather gloves, was started fourteen years ago from out of the dying shoe factory, and now forms the major source of work in Wupperthal. It occupies two factory buildings and at the time of the entrepreneur's departure employed forty people. This was always a well-organized factory and realized a substantial profit. It was also the most exploited work-place in Wupperthal, paying piece-wages at a very low rate and being under the domination of the entrepreneur. When the latter left, the workers felt on the one hand an exuberant freedom at his leaving, having had a hand in this themselves - "Ons sal dood daar in ons huise voordat ons weer vir 'n baas sal werk" -; while on the other hand gloom and despair washed over them as they realized that they needed him. This is the real tragedy of oppression; the sense of helpless inferiority bred in the oppressed. They were left with no markets, no materials, and no resources to find any.

This factory has also now regained its economic viability, this time with a satisfactory profit margin which can at least be used to build up a reserve. It employs sixty workers and is now assured of material supplies - difficult to come by for this type of factory - and market outlets. It has been constituted as a co-operative as much as this is possible given the fact that the factory is still owned by the Moravian Church. It is run by an elected works committee, which in turn appoints floor management. It is running efficiently and smoothly and has progressed far on the road to self-management, with the exception of technical services. It has also provided the organizational base for certain projects which will be detailed later. The weakness of this factory lies in the fact that it is dependent for sales on an urban non-co-operative organization. This is unavoidable at present, but it does leave the factory at the mercy of factors outside of its own control.

THE TANNERY has existed almost as long as the shoe factory. It tans certain leathers for the shoe factory but the bulk of the work is done for the glove factory. It also tans goat skins which, considering the number of goats kept in the Wupperthal area, can be considered a local resource. These skins, in the form of hides or 'riempies', are sold to outside customers, but for the bulk of its work the tannery is dependent on the factories and has no need of an outside market.

The tannery has increased its work force from four to seven, to cope with the increased production coming from the factories. It is also organized as a co-operative, but being so small has little need of a formal structure, in terms of which it is linked very closely to the glove factory.

ROOIBOS-TEA FARMING has the potential of being the most lucrative 'industry' in Wupperthal, taking into account the availability of land, the growing market and the fact that this area produces the highest quality rooibos unique to the Cedarberg mountains. Its other advantages are that it is grown in the mountains, which makes it an ideal venture for inhabitants of the outstations; and that there exists much prime land for expansion.

However, the farmers are extremely poor and farm for the most part individually, with the exception of a few small groups. They experience difficulty in adequately preparing the land - a two year process - in finding capital for fencing and road improvement and adequate transport. Further, the tea has to be processed in Clanwilliam, which proves uneconomic in terms of transport - for raw tea is much bulkier than processed - and net profit.

After many meetings in both the outstations and Wupperthal, the farmers came together and formed a co-operative association. Its stated aims are to bring the farmers together so that as a group they can - while still farming individually if preferred - make the farming of rooibos in Wupperthal

economically viable; run as a co-operative; build up a monetary fund to aid farmers with capital requirements; build a barn and obtain equipment for the processing of the tea so that the economic viability of the enterprise might be realized and in order that more jobs may be created in Wupperthal.

This last point was seen as central to the entire Project; the foundation around which all activities could be based and which could serve to realize a profit which is at present going elsewhere. The association and the Central Project Office have struggled to find funding for the building and equipping of the barn, but to no avail. So it has been decided to raise the finance from amongst the members themselves, not an insignificant move considering the state of these people's finances. It is a real demonstration of a movement towards self-reliance, and it is interesting to note that lack of financial aid here has had very positive results.

A CREDIT UNION, or people's savings bank, has been started in order to help people to save and to teach the value of saving; also to provide a source for loans. At present open only to members of projects, it is hoped to put it at the service of the entire community soon. It is functioning well at present, and is run by an elected committee. It is having a decidedly beneficial effect both with regard to education and to finance.

THE GENERAL DEALER in Wupperthal, which includes also a café and butchery, employs eight people and has been demonstrated through investigation to present the biggest profit potential in Wupperthal. It serves not only Wupperthal but the outstations as well. It has long been proposed, both by the Project Office and by the community, that this shop be organized into a community consumer's co-operative. This will not only result in keeping the profits within Wupperthal, to be used for development purposes - bear in mind that Wupperthal is bankrupt - but would also serve as a central educational experience. However, the Church has decided that

for the time being at least this shop must remain in the hands of the entrepreneur who took over two years ago. The community has reacted by starting an informal consumers co-operative of their own - begun by project members but now spread to other members of the community - which bypasses the shop and, in an attempt to break its monopoly, buys from Clanwilliam instead. This has in itself been a valuable developmental exercise, and after certain legal complications is now running smoothly. However, it is not the solution to the problem and is wasting precious energy and talent. It is hoped that the situation will be rectified shortly.

SOME FURTHER POINTS. Much research has been carried out with regard to the excellent clays which are found in the mountains near an outstation one hour from the Wupperthal village. This clay represents a valuable resource and feasibility studies have been undertaken in the hope of starting a clay-tile - or some other form of moulded clay - project. This research has proved positive, and certain members of the community have already extensive experience in working with clay. The co-operative structure of this project has been tentatively worked out, but to date no money has been raised for the project.

And much research needs to be done, including particularly the problem of overgrazing - land being badly damaged through lack of management with regard to the large goat herds and wild donkeys. Also concerning adequate anti-deforestation measures. Lack of knowledge, and security in tradition, are two of the causes here; the problems are serious and are contributing factors to the slow degradation and increase in poverty in this area.

Wheat and rye used to be farmed in the outlying mountains and ground in Wupperthal but this is an activity which has been dying for years. It is projected, however, that an association organized along the line of the rooibos co-operative can do much to revitalize this form of farming.

Lastly: because it was observed that projects would need time and guidance before achieving self-reliance, it was decided that the only way in which to buy them this time was to make the Central Project Office as competent as possible as soon as possible. For the Central Project Office is a project in itself; if it could achieve self-reliance before the other projects it could provide the necessities for the servicing of these projects. For this reason a promising worker from the glove factory, who had worked himself up to the position of floor manager, has been brought into the Central Office in order to learn as much from the fieldworker as he can. This is a man with little education but with an extremely acute intelligence, capable of communicating with all members of the community while seeing further at the same time. He is emerging himself in the direction, principles and spirit of the Project, as well as in its practical details. This arrangement is working very well at present.

VI DISCUSSION: CONCLUSIONS AND PROJECTIONS

SUBTITLE: On the Need for a Support Organization

Certain advances have been made in Wuppertal; a certain amount of development has taken place. The relevance of this type of development for the problem of rural poverty generally must be ascertained through a critical approach to that which has thus far been achieved.

There is no doubt that the number of work places in Wuppertal has increased. Unemployment, particularly in the Wuppertal village itself, has decreased, and people have started to come back from their urban exiles. Further, due to the project structure it is recognized that more responsible positions are being created for those who feel competent to attempt them. The Project has begun to demonstrate to people that there is no necessity to remain helpless in the face of poverty; that poverty can be fought through collective action; that collectively the community possesses the ability to act. The

Farmers Association has demonstrated this in the agricultural sphere as well. It is true that many people still have little faith in their own or in their community's abilities; it is also true that internal politics hamper the efficiency of collective action. Nevertheless, lessons are being learned here which are helping people to realize the potential in themselves, in critical action; and these lessons have a rippling effect throughout the community.

However, there are two paradoxes - or two aspects of the same paradox - which run through this work and which now need to be elucidated. (There are in fact many paradoxes in the field of rural development, but these two are chosen in order that the necessary points may be made). These are the dilemmas of participation and of democracy.

Blauner (7), in an argument for greater participation, describes four conditions of alienation which result from our inability to participate: "powerlessness, meaninglessness, isolation and self-estrangement." We have already recognized these in the apathy which predominates in the rural situation at Wupperthal. He goes on to state four conditions, with regard to work, which can serve to change alienation to non-alienation, and these conditions contain the words: "control, purpose/function, belonging, involvement." All of these imply participation, and only participation can neutralize alienation and restore a sense of responsibility.

But what if people, initially, do not wish to participate? If people are sunk into a condition of apathy, helplessness, a consuming sense of inferiority, how convince them to participate when the 'liberating' effects of participation only become apparent once participation has proved successful? If a person cannot read his situation correctly until he has passed beyond it by means of participation, how convince him/her of the necessity of participation?

Wright (1) has stated that, as the Yugoslav co-operative experience has shown, "the more articulate a person, the more

the village is the focal point of the area; it has a population of nine hundred, the only bus service, higher-primary school and post office, and the only factories. It has the only shop, the only clinic and the Church's activities are centred here. But the Wupperthal farm as a whole has a population of 2 500, scattered over 12 outlying villages (or 'outstations') of varying size which nestle in hidden valleys and perch on rocky ridges. The possibilities for work in these villages are purely agricultural. The main form of transport in the area is donkey-cart; in fact donkeys form the main source of power generally. Cash crops in these outstations include beans and potatoes, although the main and most lucrative crop is rooibos tea, for which the area is well-known. Home-gardens, both in the Wupperthal village and in the outstations, are superbly cultivated and a source of pride, as well as of self-sufficiency with regard to vegetables. Small-stock farming (mainly goats) also keeps the villagers relatively self-sufficient with regard to meat.

Wupperthal was founded in 1830 by the Rhenish Mission Society and was intended to function as a self-sufficient brotherhood of Christians. It must here be stated, for the sake of clarity, that the population of Wupperthal consists entirely of coloured people, abhorrent though that term might be.

Under the missionaries Wupperthal developed and prospered. It not only reached a point of economic self-sufficiency but actually managed to fund many of the Rhenish Mission Societies activities elsewhere, including its expansion into South West Africa. Its main activities in those days - i.e. the last half of the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries - were the tanning of leather, the manufacture of shoes, the growing of chewing tobacco ('roltabak'), calabashes, wheat and rye and the milling of the latter. Rooibos tea was also sold, but it was not so much cultivated as picked wild from the veld.

In 1965 the Rhenish Mission Society curtailed its activities in South Africa and Wupperthal was passed into the keeping of

Here too the Wupperthal Project has shown the need for sensitivity, for balance. Periodically, here, democracy has, for a time, had to be put on ice until the practicalities of a situation were resolved; for we cannot afford to jeopardize work-places. And the nature of an oppressed - or over-protected, or peasant - people is often contradictory: there is the assumption of the non-viability of democracy coupled with the refusal to contemplate anything else. I mention these points as well simply to show that a rural development project needs time, education, and sensitivity.

Now it has already been mentioned that the Central Project Office, while at present leading the Project, is in fact ultimately part of the Project itself. It too needs to be developed to a point of self-perpetuation. The individual ventures need time and guidance. They need, and will need for a long time, a resource base. The Project Office exists as an effective unifying force and as a resource base.

But this Central Office's independence will also take time, and it too will not survive without back-up, without a resource base.

Thus I am proposing the formation of a support organization(s) which would be situated central to a number of different rural areas - thus probably in an urban setting - and which could act as a resource base for rural development projects by servicing them in the same way as the Central Project Office at Wupperthal presently services the individual ventures: by providing technical services, education, research; by serving as a centre for the channelling of finance; and generally by keeping costs down and providing the protective environment necessary for the incubation of these rural co-operative projects.

It is realized that there are contradictions here, paradoxes if you will. What is this talk of an urban centre/office for rural development? Are we not centralizing in our effort to de-centralize, to provide local solutions? What of the problem,

he is likely to participate"; but it is precisely the majority of the people who are non-articulate and who are in the most need of the process of participation. And it is of vital importance that participation be voluntary, because to compel people to take part against their wishes is to add to rather than overcome their alienating experiences.

This is the problem as we find it in Wupperthal. On a large number of occasions the fieldworker has been faced with the choice of forcing the participation issue or risking the loss of educational opportunity. For of course the answer lies in education, but in a project such as this much of the education must be practical, not theoretical - for these are not theoretically oriented people - and consequently the manner in which the fieldworker (or development officer, whatever) undertakes his task must be very sensitive indeed; never too much, never too little, a fine balance always. I mention this in order to demonstrate that a rural development project can never be rushed if worthwhile results are to be obtained.

The second dilemma follows the first, and is that of democracy. It is obvious that the concept and practice of democracy is being pushed in this project, for this is after all what is intended by, and is necessary for, participation. At the same time, because participation - and competence, for that matter - is a long time coming, the project must start with a strong emphasis on guidance; on, if you like, imposition. To a certain extent at least issues must be forced and controlled; if not, then where is the necessity for a development project in the first place? Development implies intervention, imposition. But of course we are on dangerous ground here. For we are in danger of using undemocratic methods in order to achieve a democratic end, and we cannot afford to use the argument of the end justifying the means, because it never does. More likely the end gets warped and distorted in the process. "A very special partnership is required between those who plan and those people for whom development is intended." (8).

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for example, of communication between this organization and its projects; human, meaningful communication as opposed to bureaucratic? Yet it is important to realize that these contradictions parallel exactly the paradoxes mentioned earlier; a sensitive eye is needed, a feel for balance. This will not be realized through the development of an impersonal, imposing centralized command, but this is in any case not the aim. What is envisaged here is a unifying base, resource centre, umbrella body, around which all the decentralized projects, with their idiosyncracies and their peculiar needs may revolve in a democratic fashion.

What is being proposed, then, is precisely an extension of the Central Project Office as described, and the evolution of this body is perceived as being similar to that of the Project Office: it must be responsible initially for training, research and the like, but it must evolve into a secondary co-operative, a service co-operative, run on democratic lines.

Such a support organization could fulfil the following functions:

- (i) development/research
- (ii) education/training - both technical and social
- (iii) development of a co-operative bank (for rural projects)
- (iv) channelling of finance
- (v) management services
- (vi) legal advice

Let us understand exactly what is envisaged here, and why. The following three positions have been perceived as being alternative approaches to the problems of poverty and development (9): "Technocratic Solution - poverty can be abolished by the massive deployment of development techniques (especially basic education, training and job creation) under centralized managerial control. "Resocialization - poverty is primarily a matter of consciousness, not rands-and-cents income: raising the historical and political consciousness of individuals-in-

communities is the sine qua non of development. Get on with the Job - don't trust the suave expert and don't heed the bitter demagogue: do a little and learn a little every day." These positions are here presented as being mutually contradictory, but as such each is incomplete and doomed to failure. In fact each has positive and negative aspects, and the positive aspects should be extracted and welded together to form a workable solution. There is no doubt that we must get on with the job, but practically back-up is necessary; also education, for in the field of rural development much harm can be done. Resocialization is, as has been mentioned above, a necessity, but the necessity, initially at least, of some form of managerial control is also apparent. This is why some form of support organization(s) is required; an organization - to be replicated if it proves successful - which will remain small enough to encourage sensitivity, humanity and democracy, yet large and efficient enough to adequately service and initiate development projects.

Much work has already been done on the concept and practice of support organizations (10, 11). It is time that this proposal was applied to the rural poverty problem facing us in this country, if rural areas such as Wupperthal are not to slide inexorably into ruin.

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