

to the chief, who sends a real soldier to arrest the offender for assault. According to one Kamale *mwethya* leader, "It is not the poor who fail to pay up, but the stubborn and proud." The destitute are excused and anyone else can sell a chicken or do casual labour to pay the due. For urban workers, the eventual sanction is a special admission fee for the defaulter's child to enter the village school.

Each self-help *mwethya* has its songs and dances, adapted from traditional working—songs or the spirit-possession dance (*kilumi*), though these daytime performances do not feature possession or the full ritual. The songs are called *siasa* ("politics") and are designed for public events such as fundraising days, official visits and election campaigning. There is much praise of Kenyatta, independence, *harambee*, local politicians, chiefs and other leaders—sometimes combined with demands for *harambee* gifts or with complaints, is in this Nzambani song, addressed to the local MP:

Ngala Mwendwa, I'm much troubled
I'm speaking Kikamba
We can't get anything out of our hospital
It's got no medicine
Medicine isn't like school that you can miss
I can't go a week without medicine.

When talking about self-help nowadays, Kamba stress these links with traditional workparties, and the difference between these and communal labour: "*Mwethya* is our custom, and *harambee* is our custom. It is for us and our children, but communal labour was only force." The "spirit of *harambee*," which government leaders frequently appeal to, enshrines the principle of local people choosing their projects, organising their work and imposing their sanctions. This basically distinguishes self-help from communal labour and marks a political division between administration attitudes during colonial rule and after independence. The line is sometimes blurred, as when a Kitui district officer recently called out self-help groups to help repair the town's broken water-supply, and the MP accused him of "reintroducing forced labour." This, however, was only a temporary arrangement in an emergency case. Villagers never describe their normal self-help *mwethya* work as forced labour, taxation or government work.

The Kenya *harambee* movement thus shows clearly how traditional institutions can be adapted for modern purposes. It counters the arguments of those who see the overthrowing of all tradition as a precondition of development. The effectiveness of self-help in Kenya depends principally on this grounding on continuing traditional community cooperation as its necessary cause. The additional sufficient causes are, first, the people's "felt needs" for modern facilities (especially schools) through their experience of change; and secondly, the extensive encouragement and involvement of administration and politicians. Where all these conditions are present, it would seem quite easy to establish a similar self-help movement elsewhere. Workparties are found in many rural communities, though not all have the permanence and continuity of the *mwethya* system.

Self-help, then, is not simply voluntary or altruistic. It is founded on existing social institutions and fits into wider social processes. But it would be naive to romanticise self-help or imagine it is trouble-free or has unlimited potential. Community cooperation is equally likely to be accompanied by both traditional and modern conflict. Problems often arise over leadership, planning and accounting—embezzlement is not uncommon—but these difficulties can

be resolved. One basic problem arises from the complex relation between self-help and government. Philip Mbithi, a Kenyan sociologist, has shown how coercion can lead to popular resistance to development projects. Yet since the Declaration of African Socialism in 1965, it has been recognised that government must control self-help at certain points to link it to central development planning and avoid the demoralising failures where people cannot support a project they have started over-enthusiastically. Larger *harambee* projects include over 250 health centres (mostly inoperative), 700 secondary schools, village polytechnics and 17 institutes of technology: often there were begun with false expectations of government aid, for they were outside existing government development plans in these fields. Government gives regular proportional aid to primary schools, cattle-dips and approved water projects, but only occasional aid elsewhere in response to other pressures. The problem is now faced at an earlier stage, through development coordinating committees at all levels with powers to assist or veto projects.

A further critical problem is the relationship between self-help and politics. There are frequent administration warnings to "keep politics out of development" especially at election-time when political conflicts easily spread over into self-help organisation. In Kitui, much *harambee* activity is organised through the administration, but it is also a politician's duty to work for development, by organising it and contributing financially. This Kamale *mwethya* song shows how politicians are obliged to trade gifts for votes:

Kitheka, you want our votes,
Build us a classroom to send our children to school.

I'm selling my vote,
I'm taking it out of my pocket to give to you . . .

Politics, however, is a wider field than self-help: one Kitui MP lost his seat in the 1974 election despite his electoral claim to have given over £16,000 to constituency self-help projects. Political *harambee* gifts range from the odd few pounds to the £50,000 cash given on one day by a Central Province parliamentary candidate to self-help groups in his area. As distinct from the undramatic village *harambee* collections, a *harambee* fundraising rally offers public prestige and favour in return for conspicuous donation. President Kenyatta thus raised £330,000 for the Kiambu Institute of Technology. Organised by each major ethnic grouping, these institutes are the latest and biggest phase of *harambee*. They aim to reduce local unemployment and provide skilled technical manpower for the economy—again, outside government plans. But they also slot into the continuing struggle for power and wealth at the political centre.

Self-help is not intrinsically good in itself: it may obstruct government planning and waste scarce resources; perpetuate local or even national underdevelopment; or eventually lead to the very political discontent it is partly designed to avoid. *Harambee* in Kenya is not an elaborate political diversion for "keeping the people too busy for politics" (as a Kitui district commissioner wrote about communal labour in 1947). Government gives rural development high budget priority and has made positive efforts to come to terms with self-help in order to preserve the "spirit of *harambee*," while guarding against mistakes. *Harambee* has also proved amenable to control and modification, and offers a reasonable, realistic opportunity for people to improve their own and their children's life-chances.



Dan Pearce

Society at work When black is white

Sarah Curtis

"There is no coloured population in this rural area. Strangely enough they accepted the coloured characters as themselves, and were indifferent to their colour." This is what a youth worker wrote about members of his club in reply to one of the questions in a survey I made this summer, which is published today, to evaluate the Wandsworth Council for Community Relations' comic, *Don't Rush Me!* (*Don't Rush Me! the comic strip, sex education and multi-racial society*, by Sarah Curtis, available from the Community Relations Commission, 15 Bedford Street, London WC2, price 35p.) In the course of a typical teenage romantic story this comic gave information about birth control and raised issues about personal relationships. The main difference between *Don't Rush Me!* and a similar comic, *Too Great A Risk*, produced by the same team in 1973 for the south west London branch of the Family Planning Association was that, in the WCCR comic, the hero and heroine were black.

The response of the youth worker quoted illustrates well the reactions we found among different age-groups to the inclusion of black characters: indifference on the part of the young people, and surprise at this indifference from some adults. The comic was aimed at 14 to 16 year olds, the kind of teenagers who find reading difficult and boring. The hero and heroine were black, to reflect the composition of many inner city schools and to give a lead to those who produce educational material and reading matter for teenagers to use a multi-racial approach.

Between March (the time when the comic was published) and the end of September, 45,000 copies were sold: 58 per cent direct to schools and teachers, 19 per cent to youth clubs and 23 per cent to statutory bodies like area health authorities, social services and education departments. Exactly half the schools which bought were in the

London area, and they included 39 per cent of the ILEA secondary schools; 9.6 per cent of school buyers were in Birmingham and the west midlands, but the rest were scattered over the country, including districts as remote from the multi-racial conurbations as Devon and Cumbria. The volume of sales for *Don't Rush Me!* was remarkably similar to that for the first all-white comic, over its first six months.

Evaluation took the form of a questionnaire sent in late May to 192 of those who had ordered *Don't Rush Me!* and observations I made in ten schools and youth clubs. There was a 64 per cent response to the questionnaire and 104 of the 123 replies were complete, including 59 from teachers and 29 from youth club leaders: 41 per cent of the youth clubs in this survey had no black members and 15 per cent of the schools no black pupils. Those who ordered the comic in these cases must have considered that the inclusion of black characters made no difference to the comic's potential use or value.

The questionnaire was designed first to ascertain just how the comic was used, its acceptability and effectiveness for giving birth control information and for stimulating discussion. There was almost complete agreement (96 per cent) that young people were eager to read the comic and 42 per cent of the groups spontaneously commented that the situations and characters were "true to life."

Questions were also asked to assess reactions to the inclusion of black characters. The most notable finding was that only 36 per cent of the groups had remarked on the fact—a silence from the majority which I found reflected in all the ten groups I watched use the comic. During these observations not one group raised the question of colour unless prompted by the adults in charge, though they spontaneously raised many other issues. When the inclusion of black characters was discussed it seemed to be taken for granted and I was told by a girl in a south London school "a multi-racial society needs multi-racial magazines," as if this were an obvious truth.

Asked in the questionnaire whether the groups said that the inclusion of black characters made any difference to the story, 88 per cent of those who replied said it

made no difference, or made the story more convincing. Among those who answered "no difference" were five of the nine all-white schools, and half the all-white youth clubs. Ten of the 37 mainly white schools said it made the story more convincing. However only 60 per cent felt able to reply to this question. One teacher who taught a mainly West Indian class put a point of view shared by others when she explained: "I have treated the comics as an instrument for getting over ideas on sexual responsibility and relationships. The fact that the characters are from various groups is most welcome as it is more realistic, but it seems to me that this is an opportunity for us as teachers to disregard racial groupings, thus implying that integration and common problems are a natural outcome of our multi-racial society."

The acceptance of black characters by a majority of young people was also remarked on by Lionel Morrison, chairman of the race relations sub committee of the National Union of Journalists, in a study made for the Community Relations Commission on the work of three community relations councils including Wandsworth's. He interviewed 120 black people in Wandsworth and found that young people especially discussed the comic on its merits for sex education and were not concerned with any race aspects. Asked in my questionnaire whether they thought the white boys actually identified with the black hero and the white girls with the heroine, the girls were thought to identify more readily than the boys (38 per cent to 20 per cent). This followed the overall pattern of a greater identification with the story among girls.

Why were there no spontaneous comments by a majority of the young people on the inclusion of black characters? Was the lack of comment because they accepted the black characters as a matter of course, just as they accepted their classmates? Was it because they were too engrossed in the story to notice? Was it because they had usually been given the comic in the context of sex education, and therefore talked only about sex education? Or were they too embarrassed to talk about race which some people believe is the new taboo subject in schools, replacing sex as the topic teachers dare not discuss?

P. Mayer, *Two Studies in Applied Anthropology* (HMSO, 1951)

P. Mbithi, "Harambee self-help—the Kenyan approach" (*African Review*, vol 2, No. 1, 1972)

E. M. Godfrey and G. C. M. Mutiso, "The political economy of self-help—Kenya's Harambee Institutes of Technology" (*Canadian Journal of African Studies*, vol 8, No. 1, 1974)

Whatever the answers to these questions certain conclusions can be drawn from the *Don't Rush Me!* project. It is clear that the classroom, with all children in the same learning situation, does not reflect the divisions of adult society. Acceptance of a multiracial approach therefore follows more easily. For this reason the classroom ought to be a good place to talk about race, to bring into the open latent fears, and to look at the reasons for prejudice among adults. There may be a contrast here between schools and youth clubs, for the clubs can be much more polarised on racial grounds.

Second, the acceptance by the young of these black characters, and their willingness to see this story as applicable to all young people, underlines the responsibility of commercial publishers to include black people now as a matter of course in their publications, particularly in those directed to young people. An analysis for the CRC report of seven typical teenage magazines during June showed only one story with a black character. The success of *Don't Rush Me!* indicates not only that the inclusion of black characters would be acceptable to white readers, but that it might win some black readers: a West Indian girl in a Birmingham school said that she did not buy the ordinary girls' magazines, "because they were about white people only."

Notes

Wealth tax

FRANK BLACKABY writes: Because, rather curiously, two Labour members were abroad when the crucial vote was taken, we are presented with a spectrum of five reports from the Select Committee on a Wealth Tax—Labour original, Labour revised (making some concessions to other views), Liberal (John Pardoe), Conservative (Maurice Macmillan *et al*) and hard-line Labour (Jeremy Bray) (*Vol 1, Reports and Proceedings of Committee*, HMSO, £2.60). Most commentators seem to think that, because of this diversity of views, Denis Healey will not legislate in the budget. If in fact he does postpone legislation, it will hardly be because he has suddenly discovered that Conservative, Liberal and Labour views about a wealth tax are different; this is not exactly news. He might postpone legislation because Inland Revenue officers dig their toes in. The disadvantage of postponement is that he loses a bargaining counter in his talks with unions about the social contract mark three.

We must now get used to a new term of art, "horizontal equity," which does not mean a lot of actors lying flat on the floor, but "the principle that persons with the same taxable capacity pay the same amount of tax." Some well-to-do people have high incomes and little wealth, and are taxed more heavily than others with lower incomes and greater wealth. A wealth tax could iron out

this anomaly. It seems that even the Conservatives might reluctantly go along with this idea of a wealth tax. There were also other areas of agreement (except for Jeremy Bray): that there should be special treatment for working farmers; that forestry should be exempt; and that "assets comprising the national heritage" should qualify for substantial relief. There was also agreement—perhaps in order to cock a snook at the civil servants—that pension rights should be included. There agreement ends.

The main argument is about how far a wealth tax should simply substitute for other taxes, or whether it should be "additive"; and so whether it should or should not aim to reduce inequality in wealth distribution between rich and poor—or should that be left to capital transfer tax? How far it would be redistributive in this way would depend on a number of characteristics: the rate of the tax: whether there is a ceiling for income tax and wealth tax together as a percentage of income; and which other taxes (if any) are replaced.

The "Labour revised" version would have a ceiling, and wealth tax would eventually replace the investment surcharge; there would be some redistributive effect on wealth of over £500,000. In the Conservative version, the wealth tax would be entirely "substitutive"; the top rate of income tax would be brought down to keep it that way. The Liberal proposal is for a heavy wealth tax, up to 2.5 per cent on estates of over £500,000—coupled with a radical change in income tax, bringing the top rate down to about 50 per cent. Dr Bray is the hard man; he is not prepared to wait for capital transfer tax to redistribute wealth. He would have no ceilings; his wealth tax would rise to 5 per cent at the top end; and he is not bothered by total taxes in excess of 100 per cent of income.

Sooner or later, a wealth tax will come: for those who want to guess the form it will take—the best bet is that it will follow the mildly reformist tone of the "Labour revised" version at the end of the report.

Deaf children

JOANNA MACK writes: Changes are coming, at last, in the teaching of language to deaf children. The National Centre for Cued Speech opened in London last week, aiming to advise educational bodies on this American method and to provide courses for parents and teachers. Simultaneously the British made Paget-Gorman sign language is being tried, successfully, in many different types of handicapped schools.

Both sign systems enable communication with the deaf, as detailed and precise as verbal language. Cued Speech is an aid to lip reading, providing a one-to-one visible representation of the syllables of spoken language. The signs made by the hand, however, are not readable without the information seen on the lips. Paget-Gorman is essentially a language in itself, and, by contrast, can be understood by a deaf child who has no knowledge of lip movements,

and similarly a deaf child, who cannot speak at all, can be understood. Paget-Gorman replicates the detail of verbal language, by having a sign for each morpheme.

Teachers of the deaf have put up great resistance to any kind of sign system and have insisted on teaching pure lip reading—the "manualism" versus "oralism" battle. The worry had been that a deaf child who learns a sign language will not bother to learn to speak. Far from this, sign systems have boosted the learning of lip reading. With Paget the child is spurred on to lip reading, by communication in the sign language. And for the partially deaf, it is easier to interpret the lip pattern if the sound received had a precise meaning given through the sign.

Further, the deaf child or adult who has not been able to lip read has been left, in the past, with very inadequate ways of communication. Traditional forms of deaf and dumb signing have lacked precision, with gestures for to sleep, say, meaning anything from "was sleeping" to "go up to bed." The Lewis report, in 1964, into the use of manualism started off the changes. The report, which had a special recommendation in favour of Paget, came down strongly for trying out different schemes of signing.

For the very young child, it is particularly important that two-way communication is set up, as much of the child's intellectual development depends on this. With Paget, the very young child can be understood so enabling conversation through signs. And if the child has seen the signs since birth, some signs may be understood by as early as nine months old, simple stories by 20 months, and lip reading by about three years.

Paget has also had success with children who are not only deaf but also have other handicaps, such as being spastic, partially sighted, educationally sub-normal, aphasic or autistic. Some children may never be able to speak and for these Paget does provide a language. In deaf schools, there are often children who have other handicaps on top of deafness. The children with multiple handicaps may have difficulty with sign systems depending on lip reading, such as Cued Speech, although the other children may manage. The school may, then, become more integrated if Paget is used.

Cued Speech, on the other hand, does have some distinct advantages, particularly when dealing with children who are only part deaf or are fairly intelligent. Adults, who already have an understanding of language structure, find Cued Speech easier.

Motor industry

ROBERT TAYLOR writes: After Chrysler, who is next for saving with public money—Vauxhall? The Vauxhall owner—the ailing American giant General Motors—must be envious of the rough-house tactics used by Chrysler's abrasive boss, John Riccardo. These seem to have paid off handsomely after five weeks of talks with a cabinet that's more worried about adding to the lengthy dole queues this winter through inaction

than concerned for the long-term value of pouring cash into an obvious loss-maker.

On the face of it, Vauxhall's case for state support is just as strong as Chrysler's (although the cross-national accountancy of all multinationals leaves some room for speculation). Only once in the past six years has the company made a pre-tax profit, and that was a mere £1.8 million, in 1971. Since 1969, Vauxhall has achieved accumulated net losses of £37 million. This is far worse than Chrysler's loss of £35 million in seven out of its past 13 years. The company's aim is to get a pre-tax rate of return of at least 25 per cent, but that magic figure has never been reached—not even in Vauxhall's relatively golden years of production in the early nineteen sixties. Hardly more than 7.5 per cent of cars bought in Britain are made by Vauxhall and total vehicle production of both cars and trucks has sagged badly in recent years. In 1968, 247,034 cars and 64,664 trucks were produced; by 1974 the figures had dropped to 136,904 and 47,698 respectively. By contrast, the number of vans produced by Vauxhall has risen steadily—up from 41,779 in 1968 to 64,448 last year.

The Commons select committee on the car industry, under Pat Duffy, MP, produced statistics this summer that show how grim Vauxhall's position could be. Fixed assets per man in Vauxhall in 1974 totalled £1,356, compared with £1,456 per man in Chrysler, while gross output per man at £7,975 was much worse than Chrysler's £9,968.

It's clear from the evidence of the management to the committee that General Motors won't be investing in Vauxhall in the near future, though a new model the Chevette was launched earlier this year. Indeed, the shop stewards who talked to the MPs in June expressed anxiety at the diversion of some of the British operations of the company to European homes. They instanced the departure of a truck production, from Dunstable to Antwerp. This has resulted in a 17 per cent thin-down in Vauxhall's labour force at Dunstable. Overall the company is only running at about between 60 and 70 per cent of full capacity, according to the stewards. Opel, the German subsidiary of General Motors looks in better shape, just as Simca in France is a success story for Chrysler.

The select committee concluded that Vauxhall—like Chrysler—had no long-term future. The think tank (CERS) report has come to a similar judgment. But the government seems intent to ignore such expert opinion in the name of job conservation. On social grounds, Vauxhall has a good case. Its plant at Ellesmere Port is located in the unemployment black spot of Merseyside. Both Luton and Dunstable plants are major employers in their respective areas, which contain a number of Labour marginal seats.

The government seems to have torn up its idea of an industrial strategy, only devised just over a month ago at Chequers. When political expediency over-rides common sense and financial judgment, there'll be no shortage of hard-luck cases. Starting with Vauxhall.

Disabled quota

ALAN WALKER writes: The unemployment rate for registered disabled people has doubled in the last ten years and, at over 70,000 people is currently 13 per cent, over twice the rate for the ordinary population. Prior to the massive increase in unemployment in recent months the rate for disabled people has often been three or four times the national average. Not only is the incidence of unemployment much higher for disabled people, but the duration is longer, and the regional distribution is much more unequal.

The Department of Employment's quota scheme, under which companies with more than 20 workers are supposed to recruit 3 per cent of their staff from registered disabled people, has been increasingly flouted. Last year nearly two-thirds (over 33,000) of those subject to the quota did not reach 3 per cent compared with under half in 1965. Government departments themselves are amongst the main offenders—only six out of 26 were fulfilling their quota in 1973.

Whilst a third of the firms concerned received no exemption, there has also been a steady increase in the number of firms not fulfilling their quota, who have been granted permits to engage non-disabled people. Disablement Resettlement Officers, who organise and coordinate services for disabled people locally, favour persuasion and cooperation with firms. It is not surprising therefore, that there have only been seven prosecutions under the Employment Act, 1944. It is against this background, and particularly the increasing disillusionment of DROS with the quota scheme, that the Department of Employment has been examining it in six "black spots," as part of a more general review of services for the disabled.

The long awaited government proposals on the quota were announced by Harold Walker last Wednesday, but the report on the six special areas will not be published. The government has decided to retain the quota scheme, for the time being at least, placing full responsibility for inspection and enforcement with Manpower Services Commission which is already largely responsible for the scheme's administration. In order to increase public awareness about the quota, and indirectly to encourage firms to employ more disabled people, the government is exploring the possibility of placing statutory obligations on employers to make information about their quota positions publicly available. The government is to give a lead by promoting the employment of more disabled people in the civil service and nationalised industries, and by publishing annually its figures for quota performance. The Manpower Services Commission has been asked to consider the issue of a code of practice on the employment of disabled people for the guidance of employers and to introduce capital grants for employers who modify their premises or install special equipment for disabled people.

The statement has brought some comfort

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