

BOOK REVIEWS

The Story of Maize and the Farmers' Co-op Ltd. By R. Cherer Smith (comp.) (Salisbury, Farmers' Co-op Ltd, 1979), viii, 190 pp., illus., Z\$10.00.

Those wanting to acquaint themselves with the history of maize in colonial Zimbabwe have to content themselves with a rather thin gruel. The story of that commodity takes up only fifteen per cent of the book, the bulk of which is devoted to a straightforward account of the growth of the Farmers' Co-op, laced here and there with brief anecdotes of the personalities involved.

Mention of such 'characters' as former Co-op chairman John Pascoe (who sat on the roof of a wagonette during the 1896 Rebellion, firing at the enemy as they attacked the party of women that he was riding to safety from Alice Mine to Salisbury), and of Murdo MacCauley (largest maize producer in the Banket area who, when a button fell off his trousers, would replace it with a mimosa thorn) sets the tone of the Co-op story, which is presented more as a popular narrative than as a serious piece of historical analysis.

Indeed, the historian will find only 22 references, mostly citing issues of the *Rhodesia Agricultural Journal* and *Sports and Sportsmen in South Africa and Rhodesia*, with only one reference to an original archival document.

Because of this reliance on published sources, the book manages to repeat most of the misconceptions about maize control in the 1930s, in which the Co-op was so closely involved. As the author notes, the establishment of the Maize Control Board was 'a very important landmark in the history of the Co-op' with the latter not only playing the main part in introducing the maize control arrangements, but also in managing the scheme for the Government.

All the more pity, therefore, that the author failed to delve a little deeper into the mechanics of control. Had he done so, he might have been less eager to accept the allegation by White maize growers at the time that African-produced maize rendered the 1931 Maize Control Act unworkable. Historians now know better than to accept the assertion that African maize ousted European maize from the local market to the extent that 'by far the greater part of all maize produced in the maize belt' by the big European growers had to be exported at a loss. The simple fact is that Africans were being made the scapegoat for the large unmarketable surpluses which were not of their making.

More pertinently: to blame Africans for capturing the local market in 'exempted' areas at the Control Board's expense is to ignore the basic truth that less than ten per cent of African sales of maize was delivered at places on rail for transport to the main urban markets where it could compete with European-grown maize (see my *Maize Control in Southern Rhodesia 1931-41* (Salisbury, The Central Africa Historical Association, Local Series 34, 1978), 2). Such African-grown maize as did reach central markets certainly did not benefit African growers, but European speculators who bought African maize at depressed prices to sell at a profit at the Control Board's standard prices (*ibid.*, 8).

Neither did African peasants benefit from the privilege granted them under the 1934 Maize Control Act of selling through more than one outlet. For whether Africans sold their maize to traders, or to European farmers and prospectors, or directly to the Control Board, there was no way they could escape receiving *less*

than already depressed export prices. This was ensured by an elaborate 'rake off' system whereby traders, miners, ranchers and farmers purchasing maize from Africans were obliged to pay levies to the Board which thereby derived the income for subsidizing the export losses of the large European maize growers (*ibid.*, 18-20).

In effect, what the Co-op participated in was an elaborate exercise designed to ensure the survival of the European farming sector at the expense of the African.

It is to the Co-op's credit that its members 'vigorously opposed' the two-pool quota system operated by the Maize Control Board, albeit for the wrong reasons. For not only was the system 'the very antithesis of co-operation'. It was, in the final analysis, also a piece of blatant exploitation.

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Sable: The Story of The Salisbury Club By C. Black. Salisbury, privately, 1981, xiv, 254 pp., no price indicated.

This story of Zimbabwe's senior club is basically a collection of lively biographies of chairmen and members over the years. As such it is interesting reading and almost constitutes a non-political Who's Who of Southern Rhodesia. It is a pity, however, that someone with Black's knowledge and skill did not attempt a more analytical history of an institution that, one may guess, played not a small part in defining Establishment consensus in White Rhodesia. Civil servants of a certain rank were expected to join; Ministers were extended membership if not already members. Thus when Special Juries were created there was considerable White opposition to being judged as well as ruled by the Salisbury Club.

R.S.R.

Education for Employment By R. Riddell. Gwelo, Mambo Press in association with the Catholic Institute for International Relations and the Justice and Peace Commission, From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe 9, 1980, 72pp., Z\$0.95.

The inertia of a complex system is great. Although in a revolutionary era men's minds easily leap ahead, rapid change 'on the ground' in an educational system is virtually impossible. Thus, although published in 1980, this book is still of interest and importance, and must have provided a useful contribution to the ferment of ideas that has surrounded education in Zimbabwe since Independence.

In the first two thirds of the book the author provides an excellent survey of how matters stood in education in this country on the eve of Independence, and how we had reached that situation along a road paved with racialism. But with great perception he remarks:

The removal of racial discrimination, in practice as well as theory, and policies of positive discrimination will not solve the country's education and development problems on their own. Indeed, in future years, it may