

Credit Union Regional Conference 1972

This Conference was held at the University of Rhodesia in August, 1972, and the theme was 'The Role of Credit Unions in National Development'.

Credit Unions in Rhodesia are local organisations which are based on the two principles of self-help and mutual aid. Each organisation is operated by committees of voluntary officials who are selected by members themselves in both the urban and rural African areas. A Credit Union is a co-operative savings and loan society registered under the Co-operative Societies Act as a non-profit organisation to serve members only. The primary object of a Credit Union is to promote the social and economic interests of its members, but the wider purpose is to provide the basis for individual self-fulfilment and community improvement. Credit Unions and Savings Clubs are thus intimately concerned with development at the 'grass roots' level, and provide practical education in financial discipline amongst the rural and urban poor, which is commonly lacking in developing countries. In addition to financial education, Credit Unions undertake co-operative projects. For example, members have combined their individual savings and established a small project committee to

purchase fertiliser in bulk. Advantages include a reduction in price and delivery of materials to the local area. Similarly, maize for food has been purchased in bulk by members in drought areas. Savings Clubs can also undertake local projects to meet members' needs. Many Savings Clubs in the tribal areas of Rhodesia are now engaged in agricultural package programmes and several urban Savings Clubs have undertaken successful housing projects.

Forty-five participants attended the conference including visitors from Botswana and Malawi. Major themes in the programme included a field study of the savings club — agricultural package programme in Seki Tribal Trust Land, an analysis of the role of credit unions in urban development, and explanations of the simplified savings stamp and certificate scheme.

An outline report of the conference will be available in 1973. This report and other information on the role of Credit Unions and Savings Clubs in development can be obtained from: The Director, National Co-ordinating Council for the Credit Union Movement in Rhodesia, P.O. Box 8409, Causeway, Salisbury.

G. A. SMITH

University of Rhodesia

Conference of the Central Africa Historical Association

The Central Africa Historical Association has a conference every second year and in 1972 it was held at the University at the end of August. As is usual with these well-attended conferences, the topics for discussion ranged widely, from African history to Vietnam, from World War I to Ulster. Subjects of particular interest to teachers of history in schools are always included and this year they ranged from the organization of school history societies to sixth-form special subjects such as Twentieth Century Totalitarianism. The guest lecturer was Dr. R. Davenport of Rhodes University

who gave a Public Lecture under the auspices of the Faculty of Arts of the University on the record of Southern African Urban Areas Policies.

Most of the papers presented will be published by the Association either as separate pamphlets or as articles in *Rhodesian History*; details can be obtained from the Hon. Secretary, Central Africa Historical Association, History Department, University of Rhodesia. The next conference will be held in August 1974.

R.S.R.