

## THE FUNNY DEVELOPMENT

\*\*\*\*\*

### CORRELATIONS

Whatever is the right approach to the development problems in the third world, it is totally wrong. The more learned and experienced are the experts who are planning and executing the various programmes, the bigger and more costly are the flops they produce. There is an inverse correlation between the size of projects` budget and the resulting benefits.

\*\*\*\*\*

### O.R.T.

On Jan 12, 1986 I listened to a 15-minute feature on the oral rehydration technique (O.R.T.) on the Voice of America. Doctors, experts and their interviewers were talking about the millions of children in the developing countries dying every year of diarrhea and how and why the diarrhea is killing them. Then, they told the listeners the world over, how a simple technique of mixing some sugar with a bit of salt and a litre of water is saving many. I learned how mothers in the third world are taught what a litre of water is, how the mass media are helpful and a lot of other more or less relevant information.

The whole thing was very educative. The VOA told the listeners that the solution is not a cure for the diarrhea, but prevents deaths from dehydration; that ready-made doses are available (I wonder, who`s the producer); that the mixture should be just right, and what not...

At the end of the programme, I found myself wondering: how it happened that none of the speakers told us the secret of the mixture, the dosage, and other practical details. They told us all about the ORT but not what it is, and how to do it.

Before I tell the readers why am I bringing this matter up, I want to do one thing - to tell here what one can do if one comes across a little child dying of diarrhea. It took me some effort to find out the ORT "secret", but here it is - approximately:

\* \* \*

Take 1 litre of water - better boiled - one level teaspoon of salt and eight level teaspoons of sugar. Mix them well and and let the child drink, the more the better. Another source spoke about a beer bottle of water, 4 cubes of sugar and half level teaspoon of salt. And it said that when the child is really ill and dehydrated, taking time to boil the water may be the wrong thing to do.

\* \* \*

I'm using the example of the VOA broadcast as an illustration to what so many well-wishing, learned, and outspoken experts keep overlooking - that the straightforward, simply worded and practical advice is the most important thing to communicate. The "backgrounds", "justifications", and public-relations stuff should come next. It is, often unnecessary, sometimes - detrimental, especially when the real stuff is covered with layers of blah...

\*\*\*\*\*

## **ANTHROPOLOGICAL SCIENCE FICTION**

I wouldn't be surprised if sometimes in the future, anthropologists would find tribes practising "Development Cult" that evolved the way the "Cargo Cult" evolved on some southern islands. The service would, probably, look like this: people seating in circles and signing on and passing to each other sheets of paper. The priest would be seated at a desk with a typewriter and an empty chair for the HOLY EXPERT who will come one day from Heaven and bring a lot of outboard engines, nylon nets, and other development goodies.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **EXPERTS**

During my 7 years with the FAO I met many experts on cooperatives. I used to ask each one of them a nasty question: have you been at any time a member of a cooperative? This private, statistically unrepresentative poll shows that... well, you guessed it.

Experts aquaculturists (that was what they called themselves) I used to ask whether they at any time farmed fish for living. There was one or two of the lot. Incidentally the true-to-God fish farmer who was sent to identify a fish farming project in an African country reported that fish farming there would do

no good, and that the right course to take would be growing cattle. A bad aquaculturists expert? Perhaps. But a good farmer.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **THE CHAIRMAN**

During a visit to a fishing village in a developing country, my hosts invited me to the local fishermen's coop. I was shown a working business with sizeable facilities and met the coop's Chairman. He told me all about the fishing operations and the coop's business, using all the time a rather proprietary language: "my boats", "my fishermen", "my earnings", etc. Finally, I asked him to whom the coop belongs. "To me, of course" - said the "Chairman".

\*\*\*\*\*

## **BORN FOR COOPERATIVES**

I have travelled in a coastal area where fishermen are daily sailing their raft-like craft many miles offshore to handline for bottom fish. There is a crew of 4 to 6 on board each raft. Upon return ashore, the custom is to spill the catch on the sand and to divide it among the crew members by the marks made in each fish by the fisherman who hooked it. Thus, everyone is given only those fish which he caught himself. The cooperation among the crew ends with the fish.

In the same area, I saw a market place with modern refrigerated fish stores put at the disposal of the small boat owners and fish mongers. That has been hardly used, but the space in front of the store was full with, mostly, home-made "strong boxes" equipped with huge padlocks where the individual fish owners kept their fish. I asked the fishermen why don't they use the modern storage. They told me that they can't entrust their fish to the storekeepers. Co-operatives? A fisherman told me: I catch my fish, I keep my fish, I sell my fish, and I put the money in my own pocket. Period. When I was asked to assess a multi-million dollar small-scale fishery development programme for the same area, I discovered that this was a huge scheme of fish terminals and improved marketing-distributing system, based entirely on the establishment of fishermen's coops to channel and market the catches. No one of the programme designers ever asked the fishermen of their opinion on joining the co-operative movement. My own opinion of the programme was... well, you guessed it again.

\*\*\*\*\*

## PAPERLINGS

A friend of mine, a well known and a very experienced international expert on fish farming who, incidentally has been himself for years a fish farmer (a rarity among aquaculture experts) was telling me about a network of government hatcheries in one country.

- How many fingerlings do they produce? - I asked. –
- I saw a few fingerlings - answered my friend –
- but according to the report they produce about 2 millions of paperlings...

\*\*\*\*\*

## DESERTIFICATION

The Director of the Department arrives in his black, chauffeur-driven Citroen CX. His office room is about a quarter of an acre large, and the carpet on the floor is about half foot thick. There is a heavy, well polished huge desk, a throne-size revolving armchair, telephones, dictaphone, a large stereo radio/tape-recorder, the works. There is a "visitors corner" over a space large enough to accommodate two-three families of famine refugees. The furniture comprises a low, beautifully carved table, two large soft sofas, and a number of deep, soft armchairs and is worth a couple of tractors. The whole room is richer than anything I saw in my life, including some U.S.A. department directors, not to speak of an Israeli minister.

There is a famine in the country. It also has serious desertification problems. The desert is advancing some ten to twenty kilometres every year. Would it stop at the offices of the dignitaries?

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## FROM MY LITTLE BOOK OF WISDOM

There is a World of the Word, And there is a World of the Fact. The first is for talking and reading and writing, The other is where we must act.

\*\*\*\*\*

## TARGET GROUP

One day the UFO landed and Martians finally arrived. They found on Earth a rather low-level culture. What stroke them particularly was the lowly, senseless, and quite irrational habit of burying the dead and letting them to deteriorate into a messy heap of worms, bacteria, and dry bones. Wasteful burning of the dead in crematoria has been found only slightly less appalling.

After some analytical seminars, and a pre-feasibility study, it has been decided to initiate a programme aimed at the introduction to the grass-roots level of the under-developed Earthlings, the culturally and socio-economically more advanced Martian bio-economic system of eating the dying and quasi-dying.

The progressive gastro-ecologically balanced procedure involves the socio-patriotic sacrifice of elderly people for the sake of the universal feeding programme (UFP). Actually, the UFP-participants are forfeiting only a fraction of their potential life span (in average, 1.76%). Upon the decision of UFP-extensionists following strictly verifiable criteria, the UFP-participants would be voluntarily put asleep and tenderized, before the final extraction of life operation (OLE), and the cooking process took place.

A suitable target group has been identified: experienced and, mainly, retired former development consultants, project managers, and expatriate experts. It has been considered that as experienced development activists they will both, appreciate the Martian superior economic system in general and UFP, in particular, and be proud to be identified, for a change, as a target group themselves.

The programme, however, has encountered unexpected difficulties, stemming mostly from the conservative mentality, backwardness and otherwise hardly explainable resistance to progress on the part of the target group. All the more, that an anthropological study has established that a rudimentary form of UFP/OLE had been a part of human culture for millennia and is still being practiced, in a way, among Earth politicians. A participatory brain-storming session was called to analyse the situation and a phased approach strategy has been adopted. A consultancy mission is being presently arranged to find out a possible remedy to this situation.