

PROCEEDINGS OF THE NUTRITION SOCIETY

The inaugural Boyd Orr Memorial Lecture, organized by the Boyd Orr Memorial Trust, was held at King's College, University of Aberdeen, St Machar Drive, Aberdeen, on 10 April 1975

INAUGURAL BOYD ORR MEMORIAL LECTURE

Introduction

By K. L. BLAXTER, *Rowett Research Institute, Bucksburn, Aberdeen AB2 9SB*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Boyd Orr Memorial Trust has recently been set up to keep alive the memory of one of the greatest men of the century. John, first Baron Boyd Orr of Brechin Mearns in the County of Angus, Nobel Laureate, was the first Director of the Rowett Research Institute, First President of the Nutrition Society and a distinguished Chancellor of the University of Glasgow. It is thus fitting that the Rowett Institute, the Nutrition Society and the University of Glasgow should have established this Trust since each owes so much to the enthusiasm, energy and vision of that remarkable man. It is fitting too that the first lecture should be given in the University of Aberdeen since Lord Boyd Orr was for some years Strathcona Fordyce Professor of Agriculture here.

The world too owes much; thus Dr Kurt Waldheim, Secretary-General of the United Nations, wrote last November at the time of the United Nations World Food Conference to Lady Boyd Orr as follows: 'The recent United Nations World Food Conference reminded many of us of your late husband's vision and hard work for the hungry people of the world. It is tragic that his warnings and those of his successors in FAO were not heeded until a major crisis occurred'.

It is equally fitting that this inaugural lecture under the auspices of the Trust is to be given by one of those successors of Lord Boyd Orr, Dr Boerma, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. He too is imbued by that same passion which Boyd Orr possessed. He too has fought and is fighting the canker of world hunger, first in his own country, then in devastated Europe and now throughout the world. We welcome him to Scotland, and particularly to Aberdeen where at the Rowett Institute Boyd Orr wrote that seminal book '*Food, Health and Income*' which not only determined the food policy of the United Kingdom but made men everywhere aware that 'freedom from hunger is man's first fundamental right'.

Many have asked me to welcome you; Lady Boyd Orr in particular has sent me a telegram of welcome which I will read:

'Much regret unable to come. Kindest remembrances to Dr Boerma and all my friends. Wishing you every success for the first lecture of the Boyd Orr Memorial Trust.

Signed: Elizabeth Boyd Orr.'

Dr Boerma, it gives us great pleasure to invite you to give this the first Boyd Orr Memorial Lecture, entitled: 'The 30 years' war against world hunger'.

The 30 years' war against world hunger

By A. H. BOERMA, *Director-General, United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, 00100 Rome, Italy*

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am both moved and honoured to have been invited to give this inaugural lecture of the Boyd Orr Memorial Trust. And the first thing that I should like to do is to offer my very warm congratulations and those of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to the Rowett Institute, the University of Glasgow and the Nutrition Society of Great Britain for their initiative in having combined to form this Trust in recognition of all that Lord Boyd Orr did to try and improve human welfare. There is no doubt that the name of this great Scotsman, who was FAO's first Director-General, deserves a special place in the history of modern times. The creation of this Trust will help to perpetuate it.

I regret that Lady Boyd Orr was unable to come here today to attend this Lecture. Many people besides myself will recall how deeply devoted he was to her and how great a source of strength she was to him. We are all proud to honour his memory on this occasion, but she has very special reason to be proud.

Mr Chairman, I have entitled this Lecture 'The 30 years' war against world hunger.' My purpose of course is to give some idea of what has happened in the 30 years since the international community created FAO under the leadership of John Boyd Orr in order to take action on a world scale against the most basic problem affecting human survival and well-being. Hunger and malnutrition are of course as old as humanity itself. The fight for food has been carried on relentlessly in all parts of the world, at all times and in all manner of ways. Even the global war on hunger which Boyd Orr was chosen to be the first to direct in 1945 had been prepared for in different ways over a number of years: by his own pioneering studies on malnutrition in the United Kingdom, for example; by the efforts of Stanley Bruce and F. L. McDougall effectively urging a 'marriage of health and agriculture' to the League of Nations in the 1930s following the earlier work there of Wallace Aykroyd and others; and by the high act of statesmanship of President Roosevelt in calling the famous Conference on Food and Agriculture at Hot Springs, Virginia, in 1943. But there is no doubt that the actual foundation of FAO was intended to signal the start of operations on a far wider and more ambitious scale than ever before. For the first time, it was to be a war against world hunger, with the lives of human beings everywhere at stake. I shall have more to say about that in a moment.

I should first make it clear, however, that, in talking of a 30 years' war, I am not of course attempting to draw any comparison with the famous European conflict of the same name in the 17th century. Apart from anything else, there was a peace