

49/94

GROUNDNUTS - THE FACTS

Groundnuts - peanuts - call 'em what you like. Small as they are, they've caused a rumpus that has now flared into a major political issue. Hotly debated in Parliament, the workings of the groundnuts scheme were defended - successfully - by Food Minister John Strachey. Answering his many critics, he said that plenty had already been achieved and that the men dismissed - Mr. Rosa (pictured here) and Mr. Wakefield - no longer enjoyed his confidence. Peering behind the African curtain of secrecy, Pathe goes behind the scenes - to Tanganyika - to the back of beyond where, over two years ago, the first start was made. Facing the confident pioneers, was a jungle. Enough to daunt the courage of a Columbus.

Battling against tremendous odds, the white men (helped by the natives) got down to the job. Each bit of equipment had to come from Britain. Each screw - each bolt travelled thousands of miles. Railway lines had to be laid. Local labour had to be taught. For this had been nothing. And everything takes time. Nature was reluctant to give up its grip. Men and machines had to fight, to conquer - but conquer they did.

After months of heartbreak and frustration came success - but only in small measure. The wilderness gave a harvest and the promise of better things to come. A 100,000 acres had been cleared. Hundreds of thousands more were still just wilderness. The first crop - just over 2,000 tons - was valued at £85,000. This small return for a large outlay is the spark that has ignited the political battle. Criticisms of mis-management have been widespread. Allegations of inefficiency sweeping. But whether the Overseas Food Corporation is nuts or not - it's nuts that they've turned out, and that's what they set out to do. The prize is rich. For success of the Groundnuts scheme could open up a new era in Colonial development - an era that could mean prosperity for Britain and the world.