

Once again the Ration Card or the Heart of the Matter

By: Giusette León García
01/04/2020



What´s the heart of the matter? My informative journalism professor used to ask when he taught us how to build news leads. As a result, it has been my role model in many other situations where I need to differentiate the core of things, their essence.

Now, the ration card has become once again “the heart of the matter” in times where several people claim for its “*coup de grace*” and label this mechanism as “useless.”

Or rather, “worthless,” or we thought it was. In times of crisis, where a serious pandemic is keeping us in suspense, Cuba is once again caring for its people (starting with pensioners — vulnerable individuals within the society) and the regulated supply distribution via ration cards turns to be again the perfect answer.

My friend Rita Gema, economist by education and currently a housewife, wrote me: it is the right thing to do. First, a lot of people wanted it removed and now they need it. That is a very good decision made by our “criminal” government as stated by those with little common sense. It is the best way to distribute our scarce resources equitably for everyone. Once again Cuba is showing its solidarity and socialism, like a giant in the world, and our Father Fidel must be proud to see his legacy continues.”

Staying at home, via Messenger, we exchanged viewpoints after Betsy Díaz Velázquez, Minister of Domestic Trade announced on the TV program *Mesa Redonda* that some goods would be sold via ration card and the warehouse network — unsubsidized, but with a controlled system — and ratified the nation’s priority by providing basic products for families on monthly basis through 12,767 warehouses, benefitting 11,150,000 Cubans.

Some, as my colleague Alina Mena, felt her mind was read. It was a great idea. I was going to post it on my *Facebook* wall before the announcement. Young woman Geissa Torres was also categorical: “Of course, I agree. Me and everyone at home. Emilio Fernández, professor at the University of Matanzas, pointed out: “we agree with the equitable distribution of basic needs right now.”

Two very popular ghosts encourage the citizens’ support to this measure; one of them is the endless queue: “it is in our best interests. Hence, crowded lines are avoided,” said Daylín Santana. Tamara Moreno, musical producer in El Portazo Theater Group, noted: “I believe that is the best option. There are people like old men and women who are not capable of queuing in markets, shopping, and have no financial support.”

The other reason: hoarding. Gisela Benítez refers to that: “it is the right thing to do as you know every family will take profit of what is being supplied in the ration card.” Her daughter Yeilyn Rodríguez backs her and adds: “that is great. Everyone will enjoy their goods without experiencing long lines.”

Producer and cultural promoter, Hiram Torres, weighs: “Of course it is an excellent option for everyone as the most important thing is that distribution may be equitable, something very important. On the other hand, it avoids crowds. When people know they have basic goods secured in warehouses, they do not go queuing in markets and shopping. It is important people stay home safe recovering from the psychological drama they are suffering, especially vulnerable sectors within the society.”

From Mayabeque, lawyer Anay Roque sums up several reasons: “Really well thought-out! Excellent! Bringing the goods to the neighborhood, avoid unnecessary crowds and hoarding. It is paramount to guarantee everyone enjoy their share. Yamila Montesinos, professor at the elementary school level and with a Master Degree in Education, numbered a series of advantages: I think it would be a very good option as fewer people will be involved. There will be equitable distribution of products. The ration card exists...why not taking advantage of it?”

Citizens' expectations lie on this system to help avoid the irritating and noxious lines in times where unity is essential. However, there are some who go beyond this crisis and say: “That's the best solution. It helps consumers. It should last forever because it is the best. Everyone has their share and nobody can hoard. Hence, two problems solve at once.”

The Director of the elementary school Abel Santamaría, located in Havana's Vedado, reflects on this issue: “It is a very interesting option,

especially for those senior citizens living alone. What happens, and this has been explained by our President Miguel Mario Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, is that there are products the government cannot guarantee for different reasons, including the U.S. blockade. So those goods are being commercialized in stores — regulated — as they are not enough to supply the entire population.”

“People with artistic sensibilities have the skill to catch a glimpse of what ordinary mortals overlook. We have always considered the importance of that ration card for what it represents for non-wealthy citizens. These measures, and now we refer to all of them, are committed to all Cubans,” wrote musicologist and teacher from Matanzas, Lourdes Fernández, who added:

"The measures taken are very accurate as they favor order, discipline, and avoid crowds. And in the human perspective (which is the most important thing in our opinion), they favor the population with highest chances to be negatively impacted by this situation, non-wealthy individuals, those who need more help. On the other hand, these measures reject opportunists, resellers and people who are always profiting from basic needs. It was very well explained by our ministers and we believe it is also paramount to highlight that the Ration Card has now taken on new validity..."

Translated by Sergio A. Paneque Díaz / CubaSí Translation Staff
