

Nothing is
so powerful as

**AN IDEA
WHOSE TIME
HAS COME**

The Hunger Project
The end of starvation within 20 years

Every day it becomes more difficult to pretend...

an introduction by George Leonard



This is a source document on our ability to end hunger on our planet within 20 years.

Cover photograph by Ernst Haas

Hunger is not something impersonal, something “out there.” It exists in each of us, in all that is incomplete and unfulfilled in our own lives, in all that we have disowned in the world.

Fifteen million dead of starvation each year. Perhaps a billion hungry. The fading, failing cry of a child every moment day and night, undeniable testament to human failure. We try to place that sound on some dusty plot of ground far away—Asia, Africa, South America—anywhere but here and now. We succeed at the cost of some portion of our aliveness, our ability to marvel at the miracle of birth, to hear the hidden depths of love in a son’s or daughter’s voice.

There is land enough, and food to feed all who live on the earth. There is no shortage of practical, well-thought-out ways to end the suffering and dying. But in refusing to make the condition of starvation our own, we allow it to continue.

We allow it to continue by taking positions that prevent us from acting: the cynicism that alleges starvation to be inevitable, the guilt and shame that go along with powerlessness. We allow it to continue by supporting doctrines that create their own opposition and solutions that produce their own new problems. We take refuge in the belief that relieving the world from hunger is impossible.

The time has come for a different approach. It has come in an age of awakening, when history and technology meet to prepare the way for transformation. Electronic nerve fibers join once-distant continents. A famine on the Asian steppes affects the destiny of American presidents. The cry of a single hungry child reverberates around the globe at the speed of light. Every day it becomes more difficult to pretend we can stand alone and unmoved while millions starve.

The urgent global messages now beating at our conscience offer external evidence of a deeper connectedness: We are in the world. The world is also in us. Each of us is a self, a whole, a context, holding all that was and is and can be. In this light, each of us has the power to create our own universe, our own heaven or hell.

We begin by taking responsibility for the hunger and starvation that exist in this world. And then we take responsibility for the end of hunger and starvation within 20 years.

A simple thing. Yet nothing under the sun could be more profound. For when context changes, all that happens within that context takes on a new and different life. Nor is this a private, passive matter. True personal responsibility always involves action in the world—

Action that hews to no single doctrine.

Action that does not strive to make itself right and others wrong.

Action that claims no credit for its successes.

Action that is flexible and effective and sure.

We need only open our eyes to see a path of action: contributing time and money, fasting, influencing public policy, working with organizations, supporting those who are directly involved, offering our own skills and knowledge to starving people. The possibilities are endless. Whatever our own path toward hunger’s end, we move with the power of personal responsibility. Each of us, in our own way, is the end of starvation, each complete and fully responsible. Whether thousands of us or hundreds of thousands or millions, we act as wholes in alignment, not parts of a movement.

But no need to wait for the thousands and the millions. A moment exists for each of us in which context suddenly shifts and what has seemed impossible becomes possible, an instant in and out of time when we take responsibility for the world and what it could be.

In that instant, the end of hunger and starvation begins.



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The Hunger Project

The end of starvation: Creating an idea whose time has come

Werner Erhard

You and I want our lives to matter. We want our lives to make a real difference—to be of genuine consequence in the world. We know that there is no satisfaction in merely going through the motions, even if those motions make us successful or even if we have arranged to make those motions pleasant. We want to know we have had some impact on the world. In fact, you and I want to contribute to the quality of life. We want to make the world work.

When you look at making the world work, you are confronted by, and cannot pass over, the fact that

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each year 15 million of us die as a consequence of starvation. This unparalleled failure for humanity enables us to see that the world's unworkability is located in the very condition in which we live our lives. Thus, it is not people "out there" who are starving; people are starving "here"—in the space in which you and I live. You and I are working to make our lives work in the same condition that results in hunger and starvation.

Starvation both maintains and dramatizes a world that does not work. Persisting throughout history, it has accounted for more deaths and suffering than all epidemics, wars, and natural disasters combined. During the past five years alone, more people have died as a consequence of starvation than from all the wars, revolutions, and murders of the past 150 years. As you read this, 28 people are dying in our world each minute as a consequence of hunger, three-quarters of them children.

The bare statistics are so shocking that we rarely examine the further impact of starvation on our own lives. Hunger, by its persistence, seems to invalidate that our lives could matter. It seems to prove that we are capable only of gestures. It suppresses the space in which each of us lives.

Yet, precisely because the impact of starvation on our lives is so great, its existence is actually an opportunity. It is an opportunity to get beyond merely defending what we have, beyond the futility of self-interest, beyond the hopelessness of clinging to opinions and making gestures.

In fact, in experiencing the truth underlying hunger, one comes to realize that the ordinarily unnoticed laws that determine the persistence of hunger on this planet are precisely the laws that keep the world from working. And the principles of the end of hunger and starvation in the world are the very principles necessary to make the world work.

So this paper is not an explanation, a solution, an opinion, or a point of view about the problem of hunger. It is an examination of what is so about the persistence of hunger, aimed at answering two questions:

1. What are the laws governing and determining the persistence of hunger on our planet? Not the reasons, however cogent; not the justifications, however comforting; not the systems of explanation, however consistent or clever. If we were merely looking for reasons to explain the persistence of hunger and starvation, we could logically deduce them from the facts.

Fundamental laws and principles, however, cannot be deduced. One knows them by creating them from nothing, out of one's Self. One does not arrive at fundamental laws and principles as a function of what is already known. Such laws and principles do not merely explain; they illuminate. They do not merely add to what we know; they create a new space in which

This article is adapted from presentations of The Hunger Project made in 11 cities in the United States during September and October 1977.

knowing can occur. The test of whether we are dealing with fundamental laws and principles, or with mere reasons and explanations, is whether there is a shift from controversy, frustration and gesturing, to mastery, motion, and completion.

2. What are the principles of the end of hunger and starvation on the planet? Not new programs of solution, no matter how saleable or clever; not different or better opinions, no matter how arguable; not points of view, no matter how agreeable. This discussion is not about another good idea. It is about revealing the fundamental principles of the end of hunger and starvation on our planet.

Start by examining the examiner

The first step in examining any problem is to examine the system with which you are going to examine the problem. For example, there are equations in physics that would be incomplete if they didn't take into consideration the nature and consequent effect of the observer.

So, before you and I begin to examine the problem of hunger and starvation, we are going to examine our own nature and the effect of that nature on our perceptions and understanding of the problem. Until we understand ourselves, we won't know the quality of our findings, or how those findings are influenced by the entity making the examination.

I am not an expert on hunger and starvation. The little bit of knowledge I've acquired in four years of study is small compared to the knowledge of the true experts in the field. But as a result of my interaction with tens of thousands of people, I do have some insight into Self—my Self, your Self, the Self—and a certain expertise about what a "me" is. I want to take a look with you at what a "me" is with respect to hunger.

Look inside yourself—not at what you think or what you feel, not at your opinions or your point of view—but at the ground of being that gives rise to your actions, thoughts, and feelings. Look specifically at the unconscious, unexamined assumptions and beliefs which limit and shape our response to hunger and starvation. This is the territory we are going to cross.

The assumption of scarcity

The very first component you see in the structure of beliefs through which we perceive the world is the component of scarcity. Human beings don't necessarily think *that* things are scarce. They always think *from* a condition of scarcity.

For instance, while you and I might never have had the thought, "Love is scarce," it is obvious if we examine our be-

HARVEST

The most important event on earth each year is the harvest.

Medard Gabel

Ho-Ping: Food for Everyone

(see the bibliography on page 38)

HOW TO EAT

Eating and being fed are intimately connected with our deepest feelings. They are the basic interactions between human beings on which rest all later evaluations of one's self, of the world, and our relationship to it. The eating experience conditions our entire attitude to the world. Not so much because of how nutritious is the food we are given, but because of the feelings and attitudes with which it is given.

Bruno Bettelheim

Food to Nurture the Mind, McGovern Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs, February 1977

UNDERNOURISHMENT

About 400 million people are seriously undernourished, maybe twice that many, according to which estimate you believe.

Fifteen to 20 million deaths, three-quarters of them children, would not have occurred in 1977 but for undernourishment. The figure represents any normal year's total—normal being a year in which no special famines or crop failures occur. Many of those deaths are attributed to ordinary childhood diseases such as measles, whooping cough and gastroenteritis, diseases which do not kill well-nourished children.

Roy Prosterman and Charles A. Taylor
Hunger, Poverty, Desperation, and Chaos
(to be published later this year)

THE MYTH OF SCARCITY

There is no such thing today as absolute scarcity. Every country in the world has the capacity to feed itself.

The malnourished abroad are not hungry because of the individual greed of the average American.

The hungry are not our enemies.

Hunger, in fact, is not the problem at all. Hunger is the symptom of a disease, and we are its victims in much the same way as are the nomads in Mali or peasants in India.

Excerpts from *Food First: Beyond the Myth of Scarcity*, by Frances Moore Lappé and Joseph Collins copyright ©1977 by Institute for Food and Development. Reprinted by permission of Ballantine Books, a Division of Random House, Inc. (see the bibliography on page 38)

havior that we are “coming from” scarcity with respect to love. We often act as if we must dole it out carefully and only to those people who deserve it. Also, because we assume that everything of value in life is scarce, we act to protect things—regardless of how much we actually have—because they are “scarce.”

Time is also an example. It is something else that people consider to be desperately scarce. No one ever has enough time. Watch yourself when you *do* have enough time and you will notice that you act as if you don't have enough.

I am not saying that you think 15 million of us die each year as a consequence of hunger because food is scarce. I am saying that scarcity is one component of the structure of beliefs through which we perceive the world.

It is worthless to know that your ground of being contains the belief that things are scarce if you know it merely because you have been told it or because it makes sense. You need to know it as a result of looking inside yourself and actually seeing how the belief in scarcity shapes your thoughts and actions. Pierce into your own system of beliefs and observe that you do believe in scarcity. While confronting this belief, get that it is not true that hunger and starvation persist on this planet because food is scarce.

Just as an example—not as a suggested solution to the problem of hunger—we could feed all the hungry people in the world every year with the grain fit for human consumption that is fed to cattle in the United States. I'm not suggesting that if we stopped feeding grain to our cattle we would eliminate hunger. I'm just saying that the notion that 15 million of us die each year because of a scarcity of food is not accurate.

The assumption of inevitability

The second component you will find when you begin to look into the condition through which you are perceiving the problem of hunger and starvation is that of inevitability.

As an analogy, suppose I told you that you could go through the rest of your life without ever having another argument. Try to put that into your structure of beliefs. Everyone knows that you can't not argue. Arguments are inevitable.

It is not true that things are inevitable. What is true is that we perceive the world through a condition—through an unconscious, unexamined structure of beliefs—which has a component called inevitability. You just know that, “If hunger *could* have ended, wouldn't we have ended it by now? It must be that when you have human beings, you have hunger. Like death and taxes, it has to be tolerated.

It is not enough to hear about scarcity and inevitability.



I WANT SOME MORE

The evening arrived; the boys took their places. The master, in his cook's uniform, stationed himself at the copper... the gruel was served out, and a long grace was said over the short commons. The gruel disappeared; the boys whispered to each other, and winked at Oliver... Child as he was, he was desperate with hunger, and reckless with misery. He rose from the table, and advancing to the master, basin and spoon in hand, said, somewhat alarmed at his own temerity:

"Please, sir, I want some more."

The master was a fat, healthy man, but he turned very pale. He gazed in stupefied astonishment on the small rebel for some seconds, and then clung for support to the copper...

"What?" said the master at length, in a faint voice.

"Please, sir," replied Oliver, "I want some more."

The master aimed a blow at Oliver's head with the ladle, pinioned him in his arms, and shrieked aloud for the beadle.

The board were sitting in solemn conclave when Mr. Bumble rushed into the room in great excitement, and addressing the gentleman in the high chair, said:

"Mr. Limbkins, I beg your pardon, sir! Oliver Twist has asked for more!"

Charles Dickens
Oliver Twist

A MOTHER'S PRIDE

No Madonna and child could touch that picture of a mother's tenderness for a son she soon would have to forget.

The air was heavy with odours of diarrhoea of unwashed children with washed-out ribs and dried-up bottoms struggling in laboured steps behind blown empty bellies.

Most mothers there had long ceased to care but not this one; she held a ghost smile between her teeth and in her eyes the ghost of a mother's pride as she combed the rust-coloured hair left on his skull and then—singing in her eyes—began carefully to part it... In another life this must have been a little daily act of no consequence before his breakfast and school; now she did it like putting flowers on a tiny grave.

Chinua Achebe
Refugee Mother and Child

*No fear can stand up to hunger,
no patience can wear it out,
disgust simply does not exist where
hunger is; and as to superstition,
beliefs, and what you may call
principles, they are less than chaff
in a breeze.*

Joseph Conrad
Heart of Darkness

THE RIGHT TO LIFE

Hunger came back, gnawing me in the chest, sending sudden shouts and delicate pinpricks that hurt...

I was bitterly hungry and didn't know what to do with my exorbitant appetite. I writhed about on the bench, and pulled my knees up against my chest as hard as I could....

The pains of hunger were unbearable, and never let me alone. I swallowed spit over and over to take the edge off, and I felt it did some good. I had very little to eat generally for several weeks, even before this current trouble, and my strength now was falling off noticeably. Whenever I had been lucky and scraped up five kronen by some manoeuvre or both, the money never managed to last long enough to get me back on my feet before a new famine fell on me. My back and my shoulders bothered me most; the small ache in my chest I could stop for a moment by coughing hard or walking carefully bent over, but my back and shoulders I couldn't do anything with. Didn't I have the same right to life as anybody else...? Hadn't I lived like a miser, eaten bread and milk when I was rich, bread when I wasn't, and gone hungry when I had nothing?

Knut Hamsun
Hunger

EFFICIENT FARMING

Research sponsored by AID suggests that redistribution of land, besides improving equity in most cases, can actually increase aggregate domestic saving as well as food output over time. World Bank studies indicate that small farmers, given appropriate price policies, are more efficient in the use of farm resources than are large farmers.

Gerald R. Ford
The President's Second Annual Report on
Development Issues Transmitted to The
Congress, May 1976.

THE POVERTY OF ABUNDANCE

... contrary to popular understanding, food production is not the major or sole problem facing the world's food systems. The world already produces more than enough food for everyone to be adequately nourished.... "Even during the 'scarcity' year of 1972-73, there was nine percent more grain per person on earth than in an 'ample' year like 1960. Inadequate production is clearly not the problem." [Frances Moore Lappé, *More Food Means More Hunger*.] Distribution is not the sole problem either; nor is land reform, food storage, population control, or insuring that the means of producing food belongs to the rural poor. The world food problem is not a single problem; it is a complex web or constellation of problems; it is a system of problems that includes all the above in an interacting network. The world's food problems need to be dealt with holistically, not reductionistically. In our complex world, we can no longer point the finger in any one direction; to pervert a famous saying of Pogo, "We have met the enemy and he is everywhere."

Medard Gabel
Ho-Ping: Food for Everyone

You have to first see for yourself that you have been looking through these two filters. It is impossible to ever get clear about anything until you first truly clear yourself. You need to see that 15 million of us do not die as a consequence of hunger each year because hunger and starvation are inevitable. These deaths are *not* inevitable, any more than slavery was inevitable, any more than smallpox or polio was inevitable.

The assumption of no solutions

The last and perhaps the most pernicious and insidious aspect of the unconscious, unexamined structure of beliefs through which we perceive hunger and starvation is that component called "no solutions."

There's not a person on earth who would tolerate 21 children dying every minute as a result of hunger if we thought we had a solution that would prevent their dying. There is not one person who would be reading this now if he or she thought that it were possible to get up and do something that would actually stop those deaths. You and I know that the only reason that we would allow those deaths to occur is that there is no solution. If there were a solution, we would have to apply it.

The truth is that people do not die of starvation because there are no solutions. The failure to grasp that is what makes people ask: "Well, what are you going to do about it?" As if what we did or didn't do were what caused the problem to persist in the first place. What they want to know is, what *more* are we going to do about it? What *better* solution have we come up with? What are we going to do that is *different* from what the experts have already done?

Look into your own structure of beliefs, inside the condition from which you think about the persistence of hunger, and observe that you do believe there are no solutions. While confronting this belief, get that *there are solutions*. And they are not merely good ideas. There are, for example, at least four general areas of solutions which have been applied to ending starvation in more than 30 nations since the end of World War II. [See pages 20-21 and 31-34 for a discussion of these and other solutions.]

Fifteen million of us do not die as a consequence of starvation each year because there are no solutions.

The result of taking a position

In examining our unconscious system of beliefs, we discover the origin of *gestures*, that is, behavior arising out of hopelessness and frustration. If you have now recognized and accepted the existence of your own personal and individual

filter—that ground of being, that condition, that unconscious, unexamined structure of beliefs through which we perceive the facts of starvation and our attempts to eliminate starvation on the planet—you have begun to move out of the sense of frustration and hopelessness into no sense at all. You are beginning to be able to just be with and actually observe the problem clearly. After transcending your system of beliefs, you can just be with the problem. This is an opportunity afforded, not by information, expertise or learning, but by taking responsibility for your system of beliefs.

Now we are ready to look at the problem of starvation itself. Well, what *could* we do? What position could we take that would end hunger and starvation?

I looked at a lot of positions that people have taken:

- The position of feeding people through better distribution.
- The Malthusian position of seeing starvation as nature's way of maintaining a population that the world can feed.
- The position of giving away your excess food.
- The position of having the Government solve the problem.
- The position of getting industry to do it.
- The position of getting churches to do it.

I found out that *any* position you take with respect to the end of hunger and starvation automatically and inevitably calls up the opposite position in equal measure.

To illustrate: When I say "left," notice I don't need to say "right." If I say "up," I don't need to say "down."

It is a fact in the universe in which you and I live that any position requires its opposite position. The assumption of any position necessarily implies its opposite position. If I take the position, "Let's end hunger and starvation," without further ado I have called up the opposite position in some form or other. Maybe the form is, "It can't be done." Maybe the form is, "There are more important things to do." Maybe the form is, "Let *them* do it." Whatever the form, it is in opposition to, "Let's end hunger and starvation."

When our positioning calls up the opposite position, we habitually redouble the energy we invest in our position. That's how we handle opposition, isn't it? When you're opposed, don't you redouble your force? And when you redouble your force what happens? Obviously, you call up redoubled opposition.

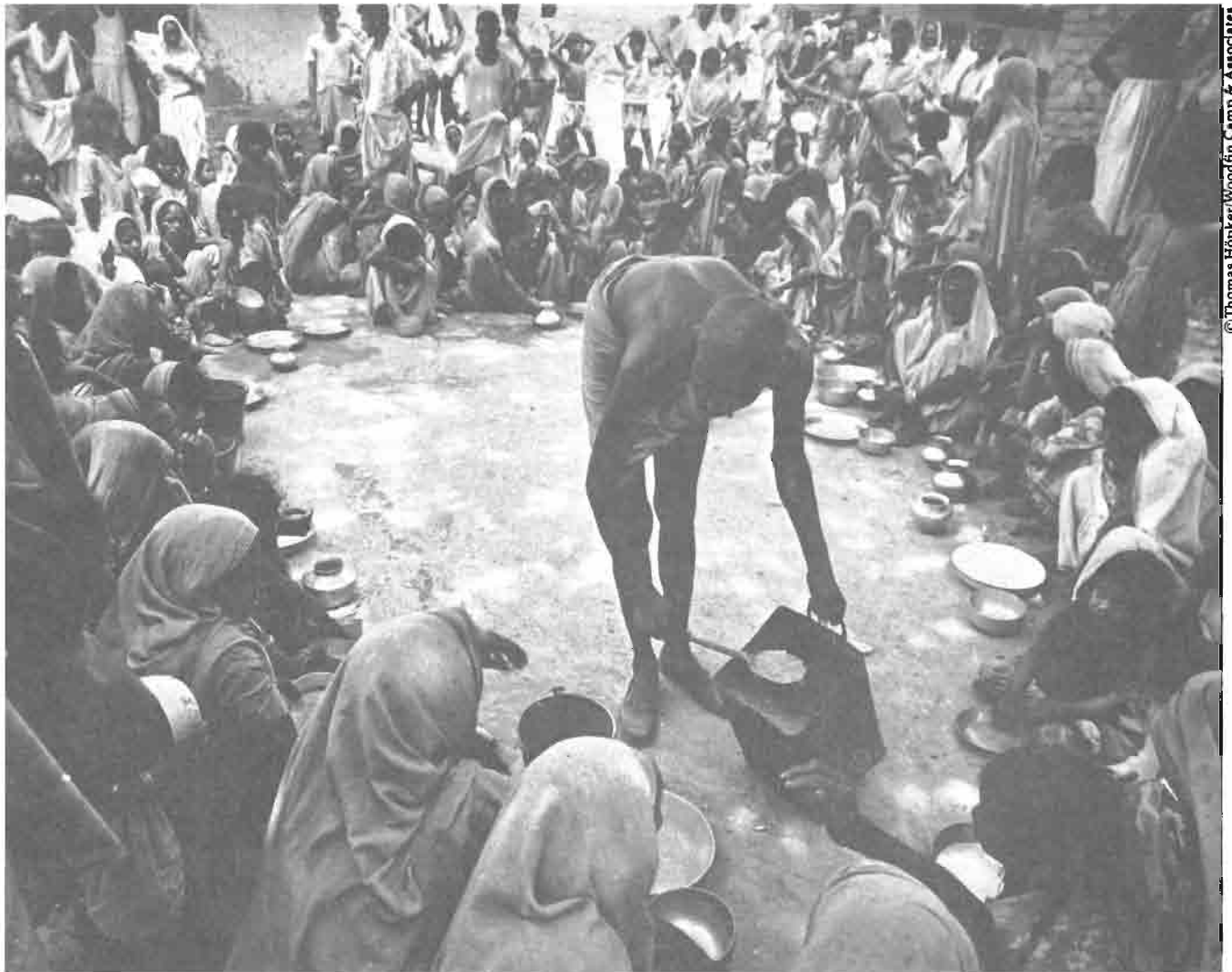
Pea soup

A term I use to describe the mess that surrounds most issues in the world today and prevents us from getting at what is really so about the world's problems is "pea soup." The pea soup

ALTERNATIVE EATING

On a worldwide basis the human species now relies on 11 plant species for about 80 per cent of its food supply. This base is not as limited as it might seem. Most of the plant species represent enormous genetic complexes: some, such as wheat and corn, have more diversity than is found in all but a few wild species. . . . Moreover, most of the species on which man relies are capable of flourishing in a variety of environments, so that a considerable amount of substitution in culture and use is possible. For example, although wheat is gradually displacing rye, barley and oats from their traditional role as Temperate Zone food crops, they remain (along with corn and potatoes) alternatives for the region. Triticale, a new species arising from hybrids of wheat and rye, also has the appropriate traits. In the event of a failure of a crop such as wheat, the solution lies more with man's perception of the event, his willingness to change and his speed in making the change than it does with the issue of whether enough alternatives exist.

Robert S. Loomis
Scientific American, September 1976



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THE MECHANICS OF STARVATION

What happens when a human being starves to death? A 150-pound man in a northern country needs approximately 3,000 calories a day; a 125-pound woman or a 6-year-old child each need about 2,000 calories per day. In the tropics where body heat is easier to maintain, these figures are less. When food intake drops below energy expenditure, the body must draw on its own tissues for energy. When this energy drain continues too long, the person starves. The body burns up its own fats, muscles and tissues; kidneys, liver and endocrine systems often cease to function properly; the heart shows a "brown atrophy" characteristic of starvation; blood pressure and pulse fall drastically; edema usually happens;

skin acquires the consistency of paper; abnormal "lanugo" hair grows on the forearms and backs of children; lassitude and confusion set in so that starvation victims often seem unaware of their plight; "the individual becomes obsessed with food, mentally restless, physically apathetic, and self-centered to varying degrees, the extremes being murder and cannibalism [J. Mayer, *Science*, September 9, 1975]," and the body's immunological defenses drop. Large-scale panic, separation of families, adolescent gangs, banditry, looting, the spread of epidemics and the loss of farm animals and seeds for future crops all add to the impact of famine. Most famine victims die from infectious disease before they actually starve to death.... Once more than 40 percent of body weight

is lost, death is virtually inevitable. ... Adults can recover from near starvation. Children are permanently damaged... No amount of vitamin D can straighten bones damaged by rickets. Eighty percent of human brain growth occurs between conception and the age of two. Brain development cannot take place in the fetus if the mother is malnourished, nor can it take place if the infant is starving. Brain development that does not occur when it is supposed to will never take place. The child is permanently damaged by physical deformity and mental retardation with no hope of recovery.

Medard Gabel
Ho-Ping: Food for Everyone

is a mass of confusion, controversy, argument, conflict, and opinions. It is, in fact, composed of positions and oppositions.

The mass of the pea soup is created like this: As a nucleus, you have "yes" and "no" as position and opposition. Then around the nucleus an enormous mass called "other solutions" builds up. For example: "That way won't work. Try it this way instead." "We need to do more." "Oh, no, that won't work, I've got a better idea." "No, none of that will work, we need to do it differently."

Then this mass of solutions becomes the larger nucleus for an additional round of more/better/different, which becomes an even larger nucleus for...and on and on. That's how you get the mass of the pea soup. That is the way we create the confusion and conflict and controversy that keep us from even seeing the truth of what the problem is.

You can't discover this principle of opposites by making gestures. The United States Congress can make an enormous gesture, a billion-dollar gesture. There are organizations around the planet that can make big gestures, hundred-million-dollar gestures. There are small organizations that can make small gestures. And as individuals we can make even smaller gestures.

But as long as you are gesturing—as long as you are asking what more can you do, what better solution have you got, what have you come up with that's different—as long as you're asking those questions, you cannot see that the confusion, controversy, conflict, doubt, lack of trust, and opinions surrounding the problem of hunger and starvation result inevitably from *any* position you take.

Once you are clear that you cannot take any position that will contribute in any way to the end of hunger and starvation, that any position you take will only contribute to the pea soup that engulfs the problem of hunger and starvation, then hope dies. And when hope dies, hopelessness dies with it: Without hope you can't have hopelessness.

You are now close to the source of the problem of hunger and starvation on the planet. If you can see that the problem is without hope, you are no longer hopeless and frustrated. You are just there with whatever is so. There's just you, without the structure of beliefs through which you try to look at the problem. By getting clear yourself, and then getting underneath the pea soup, you can then look deep down into the problem and see its source.

The condition in which we live our lives

What you discover is that hunger and starvation on this planet are a function of the condition in which each of us lives his

THE DESPERATE STRUGGLE

Nothing more overwhelms the human spirit, or mocks our values and our dreams, than the desperate struggle for sustenance....

Dr. Henry Kissinger
World Food Conference
Rome, November 1974

HUNGRY AMERICA

During that fall of 1974 when I first found Mrs. James hidden away without food, I went with my seven-year-old daughter, Rebekah, to our local supermarket, and it became our habit to take a bag of food to Mrs. James each weekend. Rebekah thought of it as the best part of our week. There was something in that experience of giving that moved her and she thought we were solving the problem. But by then I had learned from the U.S. Government Census figures that there were more than 53,000 people 65-and-over living below the national poverty level in Philadelphia alone. Late Start, another federally funded program of this kind, fed about 1,000 of them; the Corporation for Aging was feeding another 1,300 one meal a day, five days a week. That's all most of them ate.

Loretta Schwartz
Ms. magazine, October 1977

THE GUILT REFLEX

Americans, we are told, have a special role to play in staving off the apocalypse. We are made to feel that world hunger is our cross to bear. Again and again we read and we hear that the U.S. is the world's only remaining buffer against starvation. We see world food security defined strictly in terms of how much grain the U.S. can produce or hold as grain reserves. Inevitably the American consumer believes that food exports are to blame for our rising food prices.... Such a reaction to the frightening story of scarcity would be typical of even more Americans, if it were not for an equally deceptive and ultimately negative message pulling us in the opposite direction. Well-intended attempts to stir public action have shifted the world food crisis out of the political-economic arena onto the ground of individual morality. Our consumption is tirelessly contrasted with deprivation elsewhere; the message being that our consumption causes their suffering. We are told, for example, that the amount of fertilizer used on our lawns, golf courses, and cemeteries equals all of what India uses to grow food. We inevitably experience some shame, feeling our wastefulness must reflect a moral failing. Some find protection by pointing out, quite rightly, that eating one less hamburger a week will not mean that the grain saved will necessarily get to a hungry mouth. Yet with no understanding of how hunger is actually created, we are defenseless against a diffuse but powerful sense of guilt for just being American....

Frances Moore Lappé
and Joseph Collins
Food First: Beyond the Myth of Scarcity

or her life. It isn't what you *are* doing, or what I am doing, or what they are doing. It isn't what you are *not* doing, or what I am not doing, or what they are not doing that is causing the persistence of hunger and starvation on the planet. The source of the problem is that you and I and they live in *a condition*.

Here is an analogy that will explain what I mean by a condition: Our bodies as physical entities exist in an *atmosphere*, and no matter how healthy a body may be, if we pollute the atmosphere, that body will be damaged in direct proportion to the pollution.

The environment for living organisms is called the *biosphere*. You as a living organism may be very functional, but if I put you into an unhealthy and unworkable biosphere, you will cease to function.

The environment for you as a human being—the *being-sphere*, if you will—is a system of concepts and forces. It is the condition in which your humanity exists. It is the condition which surrounds us as human beings. And it is in that condition that starvation persists.

A condition is a position, a point of view or belief, that functions as a fundamental ground of being. Forces are the processes that arise out of conditions.

The forces in the world

It is the *forces* in the world which result in 15 million of us dying each year as a consequence of starvation. It is the forces emanating from the condition in which you and I and all of us live that result in those 15 million deaths each year.

Call them political forces, if you like. Study the political forces and you will see that hunger and starvation on the planet are the inevitable result of those forces. It doesn't make any difference what form the forces come in, or how you change them. When you study the various forms of political forces, you see that hunger and starvation are the inevitable result. If you don't like politics, do it with economic forces. If you don't like economics, do it with sociological forces. Psychological forces. Philosophical forces. Or if you prefer, a combination of them.

The forces in the world come from and are consistent with the existing content, the existing circumstances. In turn, these content-determined forces circle back to reinforce the existing content, the existing circumstances, in an endless cycle. This process describes the condition of unworkability in which, no matter what you do, it does not work.

The point is that when you get your own belief system out of the way and you get through the confusion, controversy and opinions, down to the source of the problem of the persistence

of starvation on the planet, you see that it is a function of the forces on this planet.

As an analogy, let's assume we live in a world in which the forces are represented by invisible horizontal lines. Any attempt to take vertical actions is stopped by the horizontal forces that turn all vertical movement into horizontal movement. You can't see those forces. They are like magnetism or gravity. You can see their results, but you can't see the forces themselves.

To continue the analogy, let's assume that horizontal actions result in the persistence of hunger and that to end hunger you need to take vertical actions. But if you do that in a field of horizontal forces, you can see what happens. You end up being forced to move horizontally. So what you do, even when you try to end starvation, is consistent with the *persistence* of starvation. Inevitably. No matter what you do, it will be ultimately ineffective in ending starvation. Starvation will persist.

By the way, this is not a justification for doing nothing, either. The truth doesn't justify anything. It's a place to come from, not something to argue with. This paper is not an attempt to take a stand. What we're attempting to do is to get at the truth about hunger and starvation on our planet. And when you get to the truth of it, when you work your way to the source of it, you see that hunger and starvation on this planet are a function of the forces in which we live on this planet.

An idea whose time has come

Victor Hugo said, essentially, that all the forces in the world are not so powerful as an idea whose time has come.

If, in fact, the time were to come for the end of hunger and starvation on this planet, hunger and starvation on this planet would end. That's it. When the time for things comes, they happen by whatever means are available. When an idea's time comes, the forces in the world are transformed so that instead of what you do being unworkable, what you do works. And you do what works.

The Wright brothers would have died bicycle merchants had flight not been an idea whose time had come.

If you understand this, you begin to understand why things in the world have progressed as they have. In 1800, slavery in this country, exactly like hunger around the world today, was seen as inevitable. The attitude was: "When you've got human beings, one is going to dominate the other."

Remember, it doesn't make any difference what those forces were: psychological, economic, political. The consensus among people was that slavery was a function of inevitability. In addition, those people knew that the economy of the country

VIEW FROM THE FORTRESS

Sitting in the middle of the Amazon, I finally got a handle on all those institutions I found so strangling. You can't sit with a shorn Indian matron of 23, who's crawling with lice and children, stomach distended from eight years of childbirth, lungs spitting out phlegm from some undefined respiratory ailment, and not get some appreciation as to why our venerable institutions were built and clung to so ferociously. They are fortresses against ever again having to sit in a grimy hammock all day, swatting mosquitoes and dying of malaria....

Nancy Harris, Yale University
letter in *Life Special Report*
"The New Youth," Fall 1977

THE RUSH TO WASTE

While Garbageology, a course started [at the University of Arizona] five years ago, appears to have the bonehead overtones of Basketweaving 101, the students have rooted out significant information—for example, that when a particular food item starts to grow scarce, people waste more of it, presumably because they rush out and buy more than they can store or consume.

Life Special Report
"The New Youth," Fall 1977

THE HUMAN INVESTMENT

The croplands of Japan were once inferior to those of northern India. Today, Japan's food-grain yield per acre is five times that of India. The original soils of Western Europe, with the exception of the Po Valley and parts of France, were, in general, once of very poor quality yet today they are highly fertile.... Depending on the human investments made, an acre might be capable of feeding five people or one—or none at all.

Frances Moore Lappé
and Joseph Collins
Food First: Beyond the Myth of Scarcity

RICH AND POOR

*I care for riches, to make gifts
To friends, or lead a sick man back to
health
With ease and plenty. Else small aid is
wealth
For daily gladness; once a man be done
With hunger, rich and poor are all as one.*

Euripides
Electra

THE ENEMY WITHIN

In some parts of the world, the net nourishment available to a child isn't just what goes into the child's mouth; it is what is left after the child's system shares it with whatever parasites dwell within that child's body. As much as 20 percent of the food that is eaten in the less-developed world feeds the parasites, not the people.

Roy Prosterman
Hunger Project presentations
September-October 1977

would collapse without slaves. Everybody would be damaged, even the slaves themselves. It was better to be good to your slaves than to end slavery. Besides which, if we ended slavery, all those blacks would overrun the country and play havoc with the white citizenry. Everyone knew you could not end slavery. You just couldn't do it.

But when that idea's time came, slavery ended. Now, in the case of slavery, it took a cataclysm. When something's time comes, it takes whatever form is available to it, and it happens.

It is not a solution which makes something happen. It is its time coming which makes the space for creative solutions and enables the solutions you use to work.

If you have traveled in Asia or Africa in the past, you know that smallpox was a scourge there. People died from it. They were disfigured by it. Recently, there have been signs in red on the walls of towns in Asia, offering a sizeable reward to anyone who lets the local health authorities know about a case of fever and spots.

Nobody collected those rewards while I was in Asia the last time. Why? Because, for all practical purposes, there is no more smallpox on this planet. It was not the solution that ended smallpox. We have had the solution to the end of smallpox—the vaccine—for over 150 years.

As anybody who has worked with the problem or studied the problem knows, smallpox persisted, not because of a lack of solutions, but because of the economic, political, sociological, psychological forces in the world. For example, we couldn't get into some countries because they didn't want any outside help. Some people didn't want to be vaccinated. And so forth. But somehow smallpox ended when the time came for it to end.

When an idea's time comes, whatever you do works, and you do what works.

An answer you can't figure out

It is clear that any position one takes will only add to the pea soup. It is clear that nothing we do in this condition will be anything more than a gesture. It may be ambitious and massive, but it will be a gesture nonetheless. It is clear that given the current set of forces, given the current condition, nothing will end starvation on the planet. And it is clear that when its time comes, starvation will end as a function of what we do and we will do what ends it. It is clear that mere opinion, argument, doubt, mistrust and explanation only contribute to hopelessness and frustration. It is clear that making and supporting gestures is only a way of avoiding responsibility. It is clear that defending a position, arguing a point of view, only adds to the



WHAT'S A KUNGRY?

Hunger stole upon me so slowly that at first I was not aware of what hunger really meant. Hunger had always been more or less at my elbow when I played; but now I began to wake up at night to find hunger standing at my bedside, staring at me gauntly. The hunger I had known before this had been no grim, hostile stranger; it had been a normal hunger that had made me beg constantly for bread, and when I ate a crust or two I was satisfied. But this new hunger baffled me, scared me, made me angry and insistent. Whenever I begged for food now my mother would pour me a cup of tea which would still the clamor in my stomach for a moment or two; but a little later I would feel hunger nudging my ribs, twisting my empty guts until they ached. I would grow dizzy and my vision would dim, I became less active in my play, and for the first time in my life I had to pause and think of what was happening to me.

"Mama, I'm hungry," I complained one afternoon.

"Jump up and catch a kungry," she said, trying to make me laugh and forget.

"What's a kungry?"

"It's what little boys eat when they get hungry," she said.

"What does it taste like?"

"I don't know."

"Then why do you tell me to catch one?"

"Because you said that you were hungry," she said.

I sensed that she was teasing me and it made me angry.

"But I'm hungry. I want to eat."

"You'll have to wait."

"But I want to eat now."

"But there's nothing to eat...."

"But I want to eat," I said,

beginning to cry.

"You'll just have to wait," she said again.

"But why?"

"For God to send some food."

"When is He going to send it?"

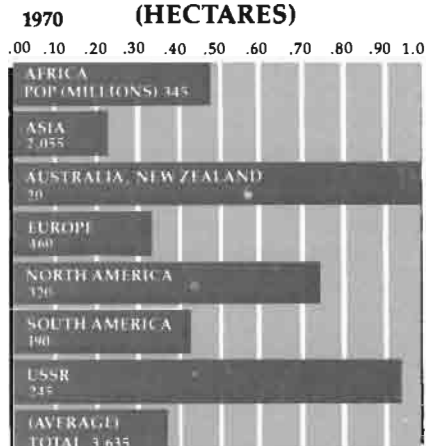
"I don't know."

"But I'm hungry."

She was ironing and she paused and looked at me with tears in her eyes.

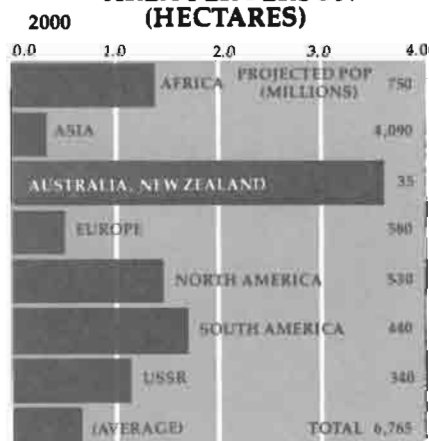
Richard Wright
Black Boy

CULTIVATED AREA PER PERSON (HECTARES)



Amount of cultivated land per person could be increased in every part of the world between now and the year 2000. Of the 1,360 million hectares under actual cultivation in 1970, only a tiny fraction yielded more than one crop a year. The potential gross cropped area of 4,230 million hectares projected for A.D. 2000 represents a figure that could be achieved by growing more than one crop a year on roughly a third of some 2,900 million net arable hectares.

POTENTIAL CULTIVATED AREA PER PERSON (HECTARES)



Scientific American, September 1976

pea soup. It is clear that when the end of hunger and starvation on this planet is an idea whose time has come, then this mess in which we have been living will be transformed into the end of hunger and starvation on this planet.

What causes an idea's time to come?

When you know the answer to that, you are no longer a mere speck of protoplasm on a dustball hurtling through space. You know how to have an impact on the world. You know what can make your life matter. The answer to "What causes an idea's time to come?" is what The Hunger Project is about.

The Hunger Project is not about doing something more to end hunger. It is not about doing something better to end hunger. It is not a different set of solutions to the problem of hunger. It is simply about causing the end of hunger and starvation on this planet to be an idea whose time has come. The people who enroll themselves in the project commit themselves to that. What they do will be derived from that commitment.

The question, "What causes an idea's time to come?" belongs to a particular class of question. Its answer is not the normal and conventional, reasonable type of descriptive or explanatory statement that a mind likes, that we are used to handling. It is not an exposition, concept, or theory. The answer to this class of question is, instead, a principle more powerful than all the forces in the world.

To answer this class of question, you have to give up your normal way of arriving at answers. Rather than knowing more and then more as you go along, you will need instead to be willing to know less and then less—that is to say, to become somewhat more confused as you go along. Finally you will have struggled enough to be clear that you don't know. In the state of knowing that you don't know, you get, as a flash of insight, the principle (*i.e.*, the abstraction) out of which the answer comes.

While this is work that transcends ordinary intellect, all it requires is an unusually high degree of openness, commitment and intention. You will need these qualities to get you past the impatience, frustration and confusion that almost certainly will result from the feeling that what you are reading doesn't make any sense. In fact, the statement we are seeking isn't sensible; it transcends the senses. One doesn't test the validity of such a statement by seeing if it fits into one's system of beliefs. The test is whether there is a resulting shift from controversy, frustration and gesturing to mastery, movement and completion.

Answers in this class are fundamental principles; they are the source of parts, rather than the product of parts. They come as a whole, which whole can then be divided into pieces. You cannot reach the whole by adding up pieces; obviously the pieces don't even exist as pieces until there is a whole of which to

be a piece. Answers in this class—fundamental principles—can be known only by creating them.

Causing an idea's time to come

What causes an idea's time to come? An idea's time comes when the state of its existence is transformed from *content* into *context*.

As a *content*, an idea expresses itself as, or takes the form of, a position. A position is dependent for its very existence on other positions; positions exist only in relation to other positions. The relationship is one of agreement or disagreement with other positions. This agreement or disagreement manifests itself in various familiar forms. For example, your position is similar to, cooperates with, or supports other positions; it is independent from or ignores other positions; it protests, conflicts with, or opposes other positions. Positions exist by virtue of contrast, such as being different from, or more than, or unrelated to, or better than other positions. A position cannot stand by itself; it is not self-sufficient.

To come at this from another direction, we can look at content as thing, because an idea as a position is a thing. That which is without limits is either everything or nothing, and therefore not something, not a thing. It follows then that a thing requires limits to exist. These limits are expressed as the boundary of that thing. Since the existence of a thing is dependent on its boundary, and a boundary, by definition, is that place between a thing and not-that-thing (*i.e.*, something else), the existence of a thing is dependent on something else—anything else. Therefore a thing, a content, is dependent on something outside itself for existence. Content is not self-sufficient.

Context is not dependent on something outside itself for existence; it is whole and complete in itself and, as a function of being whole, it allows for, it generates parts—that is to say, it generates content. *Content* is a piece, a part of the whole; its very nature is partial. *Context* is the whole; its nature is complete.

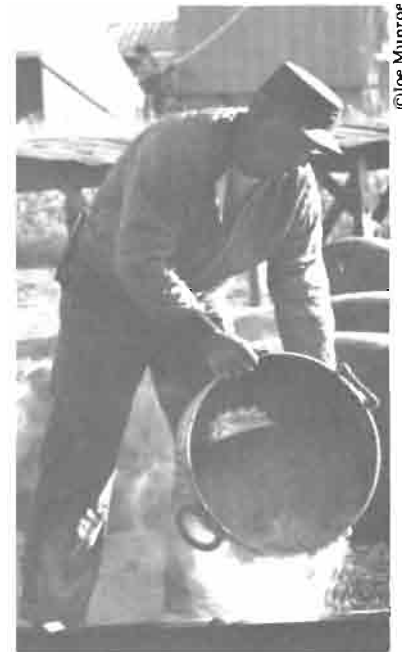
When an idea exists as a position—when it is a content—then it is an idea whose time has not come. When an idea's time has not come, whatever you do to materialize or realize that idea does not work. When an idea's time has not come, you have a condition of unworkability in which what you do doesn't work, and you don't do what works.

When an idea is transformed from content to context, then it is an idea whose time has come.

When an idea is transformed from existence as a position to existence as a space, then it is an idea whose time has come. Now an idea as position literally requires other positions for its



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FORCE-FEEDING THE LAND

For many people concerned about the environment, "technology" is a red flag. Machines are seen simply as fuel-guzzlers that damage and rape the earth. For others, agricultural technology is our last, best hope....

For most countries, agricultural machines mean imported machines plus imported fuel and parts. Often poor countries just do not have foreign exchange for these imports.... New loans of foreign exchange are not of much help. Annual payments on old loans already eat up over 40 percent of the total new aid from the industrial countries.

In any case, making a nation's food production dependent on imported machinery that requires foreign exchange can be self-defeating. In a real sense, the machines tend to determine what is to be grown. In order to import agricultural technology, a country has to sell something else to get the foreign exchange to pay for it. Thus, the more tractors and harvesters imported, the more peanuts, vegetables, cotton, meat, palm oil, or cocoa are likely to be produced for export to pay for them. Relying on imported agricultural technology can thus reduce the domestic food supply simply because land that might be growing food is forced to "grow" foreign exchange to pay for the machines.

**Frances Moore Lappé
and Joseph Collins**
Food First: Beyond the Myth of Scarcity

A WELCOMING CONTEXT

Technology is tremendously important, but it has to have a welcoming context for its use. Technology alone is not going to solve the balance of our problem.

Roy Prosterman
*The Hunger Project presentations
September-October 1977*

existence, while an idea as space is both self-sufficient, requiring nothing else in order to exist, and allows for—is the space of—the existence of other ideas. When an idea is transformed from existing as a function of other ideas to being the space that allows all other ideas, then it is an idea whose time has come.

When an idea is transformed from content to context, then it is an idea whose time has come.

Creating a context: putting a man on the moon

Contexts are created by the Self, out of nothing. When you stop identifying yourself as a thing, as a position, and start experiencing your Self as the context, as the space, for your life—when you start experiencing that you are the context in which the content of your life occurs—you will automatically and necessarily experience responsibility for all the content in your space. You will experience that you are whole and complete and that you are aligned with other Selves, with the Self.

When you experience your Self as space, you create contexts from which you can come into the world. One such context is the end of hunger and starvation on our planet within two decades.

You are probably not yet clear about what context is—at least, not how it works—so we'll use an example. On May 25, 1961, President John F. Kennedy initiated a context when he told Congress: "This nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the earth."

By creating the context, "A man on the moon in 10 years," Kennedy transformed space travel from merely a good idea—which had not succeeded despite considerable attempts, the feasibility of which had been questioned, argued, and discussed—into an idea whose time had come.

The result of what Kennedy did can be understood by analogy. It is as if he created a building named, "A man on the moon in 10 years," and inside that building he put offices for all the various ideas, positions, notions and people that had to do with space flight. The first office inside the front door of the building in 1961 would have been called, "It can't be done." This office would have been inhabited by the skeptics and cynics.

A content or position is threatened by any opposite position. Given two opposing positions, only one can survive. On the other hand, a context gives space to, it literally allows, it even encourages, positions that are apparently opposite. In fact, the most important position in a newly-created context is the position which appears to oppose the context.

It is important to get that opposing positions actually

contribute to establishing a context. In the case of the civil rights movement during the 1960s, for example, all those people who opposed civil rights for blacks actually contributed to creating a national dialogue that demonstrated to the country that the issue could no longer be ignored. Every government official in the South who stood in the doorway of a school and prevented black children from entering had been a cause, a part of the persistence, of the problem, of the oppression. After the creation of a context—"equal rights and dignity for blacks"—*the very same action* that had been a part of the problem's persistence became an action contributing to the end of legal discrimination against minority races. Then, every such action contributed to an increased awareness of the issue, to the passage of civil rights legislation, and to the gradual change in attitude that ultimately evidenced itself in the recognition that civil rights was an idea whose time had come.

In a newly-created context the most important position is the position, "It can't be done." That is the first and most important content to be processed, to be realigned. Anyone who has created a context knows that context generates process; process in turn grinds up content, it changes content so that it becomes aligned with the context.

In the building of "A man on the moon in 10 years," the skeptics and cynics were working on "It can't be done" in the context of doing it, so that instead of being a threat or a stop to the goal, suddenly their skepticism and cynicism started contributing to the achievement of the goal.

All the forces in the world are not so powerful as an idea whose time has come. Context generates process. A contextually-generated process transcends the existing forces; it transforms those forces. A contextually-generated process aligns the existing forces within the context. Then the aligned forces provide a condition of workability. Every action taken in a context is a fulfillment of, an expression of, and a manifestation of that context. The pessimism, the cynicism, the position, "It can't be done," are ground up by the process generated by the context, and are transformed into the material out of which the result is achieved. When an idea is transformed so that the apparently opposing idea actually validates and gives expression to the idea, then it is an idea whose time has come.

Pretty soon the it-can't-be-done people became aligned. They were still skeptics (that's their nature), they were still cynics (that's their nature), but they were suddenly now cynical and skeptical *and* in alignment with the context called "A man on the moon in 10 years."

Then they just moved out of the way and the new office in the front of the building was: "You can't put a man on the moon

THE MOST NATURAL THING

... But let us not think that development or employment is anything but the most natural thing in the world. It occurs in every healthy person's life. There comes a point when he simply sets to work... What is stopping us? Theories, planning. I have come across planners at the [Indian] Planning Commission who have convinced themselves that even within 15 years it is not possible to put the willing labor power of India to work... What is the argument behind it? Oh! The argument is very clever, a splendid piece of model building. They have ascertained that in order to put a man to work you need on average so much electricity, so much cement, and so much steel. This is absurd... The Taj Mahal was built without electricity, cement and steel and... all the cathedrals of Europe were built without them. It is a fixation in the mind, that unless you have the latest you can't do anything at all, and this is the thing that has to be overcome... What makes us think we need electricity, cement and steel before we can do anything at all? The really helpful things will not be done from the centre; they cannot be done by big organizations but they can be done by the people themselves. If we can recover the sense that it is the most natural thing for every person born into this world to use his hands in a productive way and that it is not beyond the wit of man to make this possible, then I think the problem of unemployment will disappear and we shall soon be asking ourselves how we can get all the work done that needs to be done.

E. F. Schumacher
Small is Beautiful

(see the bibliography on page 38)

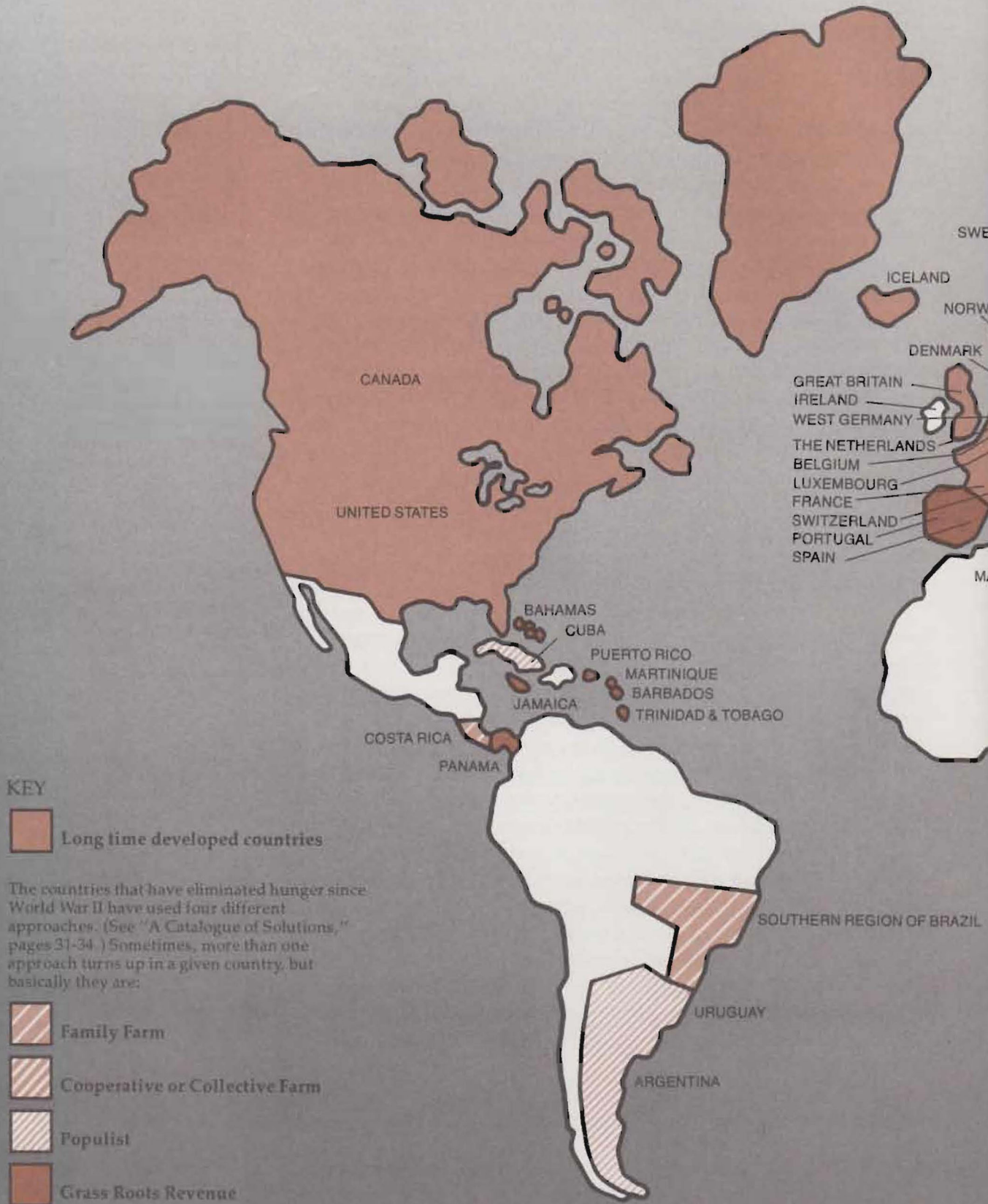
(continued on page 22)

We are in the final push

Hunger is a condition that has already ended for more than half the people on earth. Just since World War II, 32 countries with more than 1.6 billion people—40 percent of the

planet's population—have eliminated hunger as a basic issue. When the populations of the long-time developed countries are added, the total comes to more than 2.1 billion. These countries have brought about the end of starvation for half of us with a combination of measures that gave improved nutrition and were complemented in each case with basic

preventive health measures such as immunization programs and clean water supplies. This is not to say that nobody is hungry in the countries named on the map below. It does mean that living standards have changed recently in 32 of them so that hunger no longer dominates the lives of the people there. The change can be measured in terms of life and

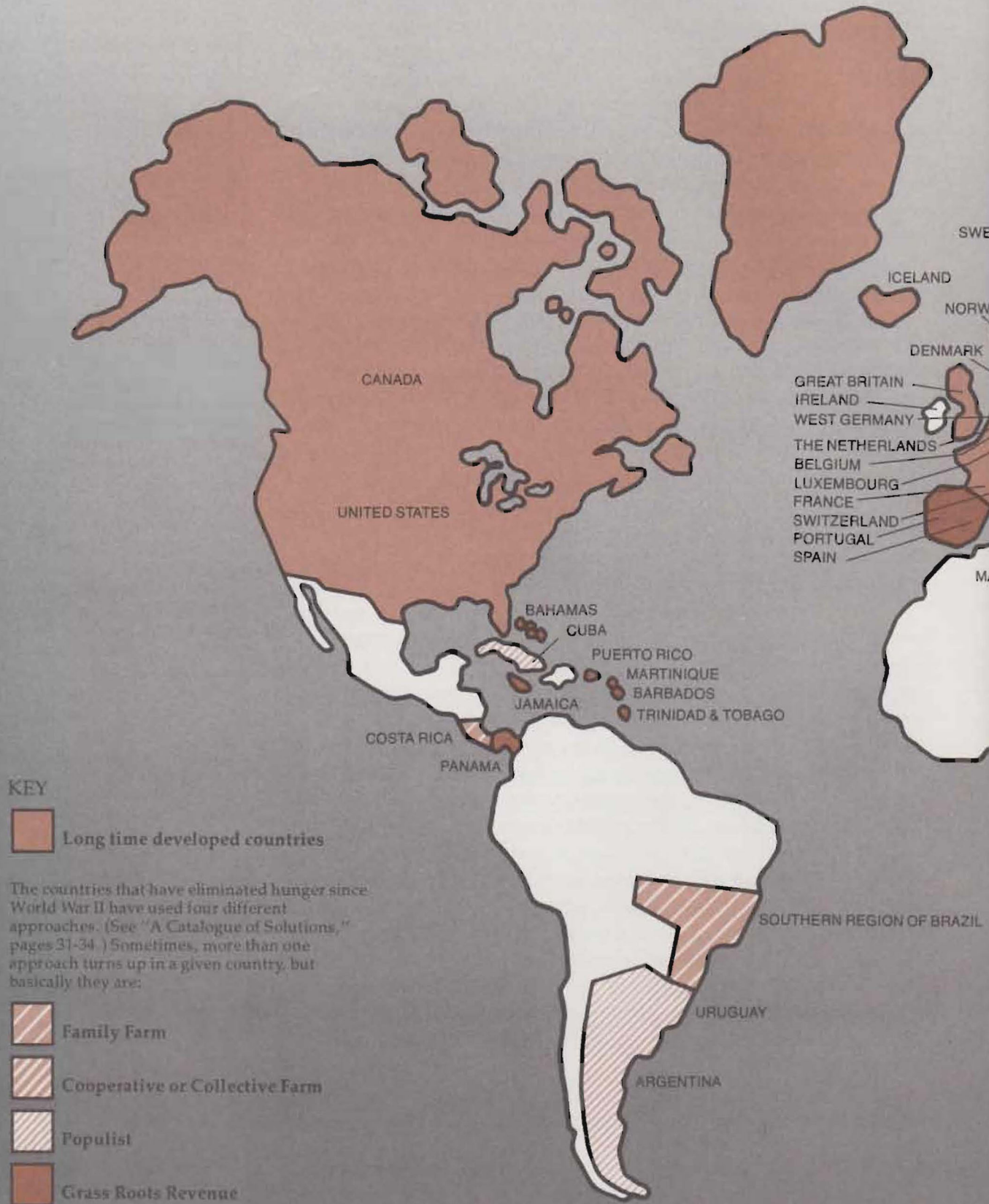


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without this specific kind of metal and we don't have this specific kind of metal."

As we all know, the metals were invented and produced. Then what moved up was: "But you don't know whether to do it with high technology or high energy." We know that that one was resolved. The Russians said high energy. The United States said high technology. It didn't make any difference. Within the context of putting a man on the moon in 10 years, either one of the solutions would have worked.

Unlike the problem of hunger, in which solutions already exist, there were no solutions to the problem of getting a man to the moon in 1961. President Kennedy created a context called "A man on the moon in 10 years," and out of that context, in which the question of feasibility was merely one of many positions within the context, came the workable solution: the Congressional approval, appropriations of money, technological breakthroughs, NASA, and, ultimately, men on the moon. Before then, space travel was not possible because the attempts to make it real existed in a condition of unworkability.

In 1961, the people all the way in the back of the building called "A man on the moon in 10 years" were optimists. Much less than 10 years later they had the first office, the office of "It will be done." In 1969, it was done.

The position "It will be done" and the position "You can't do it" are merely positions within the context of "A man on the moon in 10 years"—or within the context of "The end of hunger and starvation on this planet in two decades."

The Hunger Project should not be compared literally with the space project. It is the power of a context to cause an idea's time to come that is analogous; nothing else.

The context of an end to world hunger

Within two months of the initiation of The Hunger Project, the National Academy of Sciences published a report based on a two-year study announcing that we have the ability to end hunger and starvation on the planet in two decades. The report stressed that a key factor in ending hunger is the will to reach that goal. As you can see, the facts support that the end of hunger and starvation is an idea whose time has come.

A month after The Hunger Project was initiated I was in Honolulu having dinner. The man sitting on my left was a retired aerospace executive. He had been so successful that he became a consultant. Then he'd become even more successful and he retired.

He was polite. He listened to my whole presentation, and finally he got so riled up that he stood up and shouted: "I am

"YES, BUT..."

Anyone who has enrolled in The Hunger Project has certainly examined his or her reservations about ending starvation. Of the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of considerations on the subject, a few are: I have enough worries of my own. It's too bad and all that, but I don't really want to be bothered by it right now.

Death by hunger is an unfortunate but necessary check on population growth.

Giving food to hungry people will just make the problem much worse.

I really want to do something about people starving, but I'm not sure how big a sacrifice I could make. If it means eating soybean hamburgers, or being a vegetarian, I don't think my commitment is that big.

If the big charity organizations and governments haven't solved the problem, what can I do?

There's no way you can help people who aren't intelligent and resourceful enough to take care of themselves.

You'd have to change human nature: Farmers would have to revolutionize agriculture; people would have to change their diets; governments would have to accept new ideologies. It could never happen.

Land reform is the only answer—but land reform isn't possible without socialism.

The "Green Revolution" is a failure. If technology can't solve the problem, nothing can.

It's all too depressing to think about. It's all hopeless anyway. There's nothing that can be done about it.

tired of listening to people talk about hunger who don't know anything about it! What are you going to *do* about hunger? You can't end hunger with *words*! You've got to *do something!*"

At that point everything calmed down a bit. I stood up, to even the game out a bit so people at the table wouldn't feel strange, and I said: "You know something? You're right. And we'd like to invite you to be the person in The Hunger Project responsible for, 'You've got to do something.'"

The point is not that I somehow one-upped him, but that his annoyance and apparent opposition were simply signs of frustration at his inability to affect a situation that he cared about very much. Since that evening, he has gone out of his way to support The Hunger Project.

Let's not be stupid. Obviously, something has to be done. Anybody can see that. When people say, "But don't you see that you can't end starvation with words?" that's like saying, "Don't you see the floor down there?" Of course, but that isn't the point of The Hunger Project. Everybody sees that something has to be done. The point is to create a climate, an environment—specifically to create a context, a commitment to the end of starvation—in which what is done is effective.

Instead of the condition in the world creating lines of force running horizontally and our activities to eliminate hunger running vertically, the context will generate a process to realign the forces so that the lines of force start running vertically. Then, within a realigned set of forces, what you did that didn't work before suddenly works. It's the same thing you were doing before, except that suddenly it now works. Every action taken in a context becomes a fulfillment of, an expression of, and a manifestation of that context. In that context your intention to end starvation can be realized.

The Hunger Project is not something more to do. It is not something better than what is being done. It is not some new and different and wonderful thing which makes everything in the past obsolete. No. The Hunger Project is about causing the end of hunger and starvation on the planet in two decades to be an idea whose time has come, by causing the end of hunger and starvation in two decades to exist as a context for what we do and for the process of decision and discussion by which we arrive at what to do.

The power of context

There isn't a person reading this who does not know the power of context in his or her own life. Whether you were conscious of it or not at the time, there have been times when you created a context in your life. As a consequence of your

MORE "YES, BUT..."

How can I contribute on a large scale when I can't even handle hunger on a one-to-one basis? Every panhandler means a trauma of indecision for me—should I give this man a quarter, but not that one? Does giving him money make me a sucker?

Why should the United States worry about other countries' internal problems? Don't we have enough problems of our own?

Nothing can be done without changing the basic structure of international economics. The huge multinational companies that control the means of production and distribution are not interested in tackling the problems of food distribution in poor countries.

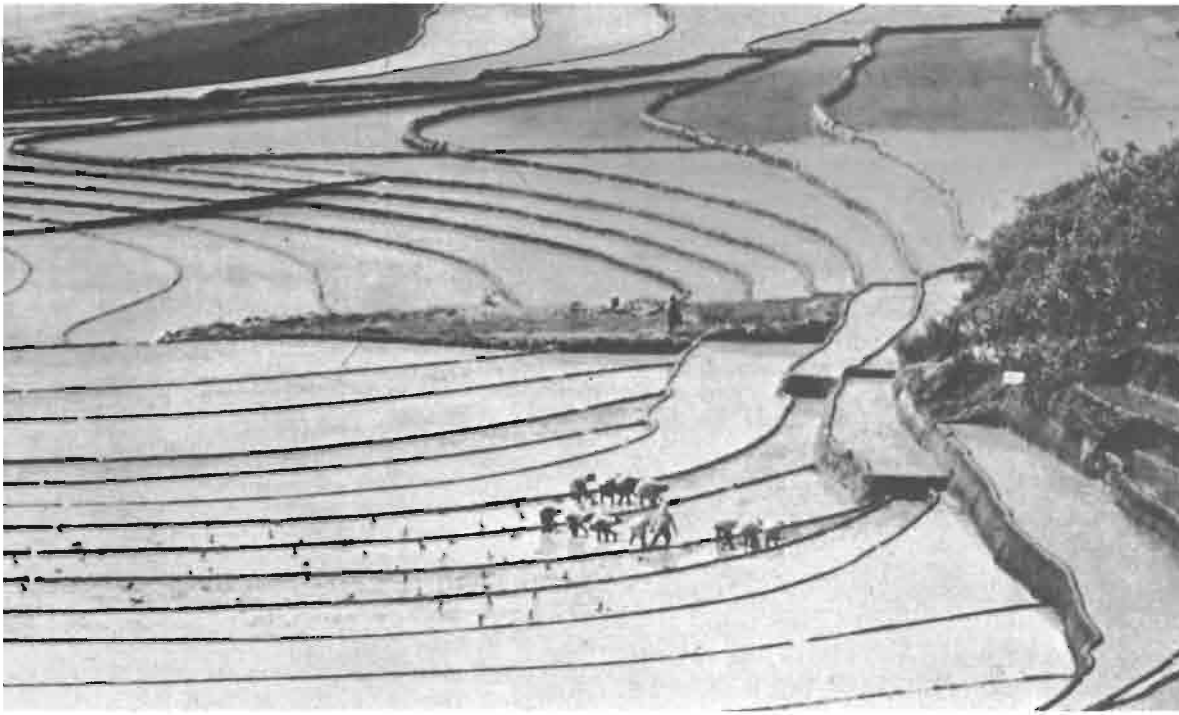
The rate of population growth is greater than the rate of increase in the world's food production. The only solution is birth control.

If people are really responsible for themselves, then starving people are responsible for starving. It's too bad, but it's their problem, not mine. I didn't cause starvation.

Only the smartest and the strongest survive. It's always been that way, and that's the way it was meant to be. It's the way of the world. Nobody I know is hungry.

I contribute to charities, I support aid legislation. I've done my part; now let somebody else do theirs.

We've always had starvation. Why should I be asked to do something about it? Why me? Why now?



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OPPORTUNITY

If there is the political will in this country and abroad ... it should be possible to overcome the worst aspects of widespread hunger and malnutrition within one generation. By the end of the century, food production could be doubled in the developing countries. In the high-income countries, grain production could be increased by more than the total grain production of the United States today, even while maintaining reasonable production costs despite the rising costs of energy, water, and other requirements. We find these prospects exciting and worthy of strong national and international efforts, and we believe that a latent political will now exists in numerous countries which could be mobilized in a mutually supporting fashion to commence and support such efforts.

National Academy of Sciences
World Food and Nutrition Study, 1977



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doing so, suddenly things started to work: That which previously did not work, that which was stuck and not moving, suddenly began to move and start working. When you create a context, it's not that you are now doing something very much different from what you were doing before or even that you now know something very much different from what you knew before. It is that there is a shift in the climate, the space—specifically, the context—in which you work, that makes things suddenly workable.

I tell you that the power of context is real. True, it doesn't seem very real if you operate out of a system of reality that says that the body of the person over there is more real than the love that that person experiences. My love for you is a lot more real to me than your body is. Your love is an experience more real for me than your face. The context—the end of hunger and starvation on the planet in two decades—is very real for me. It's more real than the “yes-buts,” “how-about,” the confusion, the doubt, the controversy, the conflict. This context is now more real for me than the facts regarding the persistence of starvation. For me, the context created now has a power greater than those facts. It has the power to generate a process, to generate a set of forces which are aligned with the end of hunger and starvation and which will create the circumstances within the next 20 years for the end of starvation.

I have something I want to tell you which is very delicate. Perhaps delicate things should not be said in public because they are apt to be misunderstood. This is something so delicate it requires intimacy. So I say this to you not as a public statement but in the intimacy of the relationship which we have now established as beings.

Until now, each time someone has died as a consequence of starvation, that death was further evidence of the persistence of hunger and starvation. The instant you create a context—the end of hunger and starvation on the planet—then deaths resulting from starvation occur in that context, and suddenly the same deaths that had been a manifestation of the persistence of the problem become a manifestation of, virtually a contribution to, the end of the problem.

When a space in which something happens is transformed, the same happening takes on a different meaning and therefore leads to a different result. No one would ask anyone to die as a contribution toward the end of death—and it is a fact that when you create a context around death and make that context real, it does shift the meaning and result of the event.

A person can die as evidence of the persistence of hunger and starvation, in which case that person's life and death have been reduced to meaninglessness. A person can die in the

ACE IN THE HOLE

Shukhov sat himself on the edge of a wooden form, he'd sat on worse things. He leaned back against the wall, his jacket tightening about his body, and felt a lump in his clothing. Ah, yes, his little ace in the hole, the hunk of bread he'd brought along for lunch. He always brought along the same amount, and never touched it before lunchtime. The other half he ate for breakfast, usually, but today he'd saved it. Now he saw he wasn't going to gain by it he was still hungry and he had a terrific craving to eat right now, here where it was warm. Five hours until lunchtime. A hell of a long time.

The ache in his back had traveled down to his legs now, they were weak and trembling. If he could only get near the stove. He laid his mittens on his knees, opened his coat, untied the face-cloth from around his neck (breaking the ice off it to fold it) and put it in his pocket. Then he eased the bread out of his pocket and laid it in a clean rag, guarding it behind the flap of his overcoat so not a crumb would fall, and began to chew. He'd had the bread next to his body under two layers of clothing, so it hadn't frozen.

He used to think about how they'd eaten at home in the village: big bowls of potatoes and platefuls of groats and, way back, great big chunks of meat. And they'd guzzled milk until their guts burst. But now, in the camps, he knew they'd gone about it the wrong way then. You had to eat concentrating on the food, as he did now, nibbling off little corners, and turning them on his tongue, and rolling them around in his mouth. That was the way to get the taste out of food. Even this soggy black bread. For eight years now—more—what had he been eating? Not a damn thing. But look at the work he'd been able to do on that nothing! It came of knowing how to eat.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn
One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich

context of the end of hunger and starvation, and the context affords meaning—almost purpose—to that life and death.

What can the little individual do?

There are four generating principles of The Hunger Project and I want to discuss them now.

The first generating principle comes from a question Buckminster Fuller asks. Bucky's question is: "What can the little individual do?" What can you do as an individual that some big organization or government can't do?

What you can do that no other entity can do is create a context. Only you have the power to create a context. It cannot be done by a group. It cannot be done by an organization. It must happen within the Self. The home of context is Self. Only within your Self can you create the context: The end of hunger and starvation on the planet within two decades. *That* is what the little individual can do.

I know that underneath our facades, underneath the junk that we bother ourselves with in life, right underneath the surface—and I have been underneath the surface of tens and tens of thousands of people—is the experience of an innate and natural responsibility for the world in which we live. It is not something you have to jam in there or convince people of.

I want to convince you of nothing. I have nothing to convince you of. The experience of responsibility already exists within your Self. All you have to do is experience your Self as the space of your experience and you will automatically and necessarily experience responsibility for everything within *your* space. The Hunger Project is a natural consequence of the experience of individual and personal responsibility, of your Self's experience that hunger and starvation exist in *your* space, in *your* world.

Now as a practical expression of that, you will ask: "What can I do?" The Hunger Project does not answer that for you. It goes out of its way to not answer that question for you. Instead, it creates a context in which you get to answer that question yourself, so that the answer is *your own* answer.

The first generating principle of The Hunger Project is that it is a project of individual and personal responsibility.

It has nothing to do with guilt. If you want to feel guilty, fine. Keep it to yourself. It's not part of the project. The Hunger Project has nothing to do with feeling sorry for starving people. I consider feeling sorry for those people demeaning to their humanity. If you want to feel sorry, please don't get it on me. The project is not about being ashamed. You do not have to be ashamed about what you eat, even about what you waste. Being

THE SILENT CRISIS

Historically, famine has been limited to relatively small geographic areas, as in Ireland in 1847 and in West Bengal in 1943. But advances in global and national food distribution and transportation systems now ensure that food scarcity is allocated according to income levels, with scarcity concentrated among the world's poor, wherever they are. Today, even while the threat of traditional famine persists in some areas, a less visible crisis of hunger and malnutrition is emerging among the world's lowest income groups—whether in the Philippines, Bangladesh, sub-Saharan Africa, northeastern Brazil, or among the Andean Indians. The silent crisis of malnutrition may be denying close to a billion human beings the basic right to realize their full genetic potential, their full humanity....

The world's principal unrealized potential for expanding food production is now concentrated in the developing countries. Although soil quality in Bangladesh is as good as in Japan, rice yields are only one third of those attained in Japan. India's area of cropland is roughly comparable to that of the United States, yet it harvests only 100 million tons of grain, while the United States harvests 250 million tons. And corn yields in Brazil and Thailand are still less than one third those of the United States.

Lester R. Brown with Erik P. Eckholm
By *Bread Alone*
(see the bibliography on page 38)

ashamed of what you waste is a mere gesture. It's a cop-out. It's cheap. The project is not about blaming anybody. It's not even about your personal interest. Of course, it is very much in your personal, selfish interest to eliminate starvation. If people don't get fed, your life is going to get very miserable in about 20 or 30 years, according to the experts. And this project is not about your selfish interest.

People have said to me: "Sure, you can talk to 40,000 people and get them all fired up. How long will that excitement and commitment last? What will happen after it wears off?"

If I have to keep people fired up, this project is a joke. If this project isn't natural to your Self, this project is a fraud.

This project is about you, and I suggest that if you get in touch with your Self, you will experience a natural, spontaneous sense of responsibility.

An alignment of wholes

The second generating principle is that the project is an alignment of wholes, not a sum of parts. In this project you do not do your "part." There is no "part" for you to do. This is a project in which you are the *whole* project.

If you enroll yourself in the project you become the source of the project. It becomes your project and anyone working to eliminate hunger and starvation around the world will be working for you because you have taken the responsibility to create the context of the end of hunger and starvation on the planet. When you do that, anybody doing anything is working for you.

Let me give you an analogy. If you take a transparency, a photographic slide, and you cut the transparency in half and you project one half on a screen, what you see is half a picture. On the other hand, if you take a holographic transparency and you cut it in half and you project it, what you see is the whole picture. In a holographic transparency, each part is not a part. Each part is a whole that contains the entire picture.

Similarly, The Hunger Project is not you doing your part. It is a transformation from you doing your part, to you being the source of it all. The Hunger Project is an alignment of sources, an alignment of wholes. You are the source of The Hunger Project. You make the project completely yours in a way that allows others to make it completely theirs. No one gets credit for the project, and each of us is allowed to own the project completely.

This is not a movement. This is not a bandwagon. There is no movement or bandwagon to join. You can't be a part of something here. You can only be the whole thing, aligned with other people who also are the whole thing.

Alignment is the spontaneous cooperation of wholes com-



Cabbages: Detail, peasant painting from Hainan County, People's Republic of China.

ing from a context or common purpose. *Agreement*, on the other hand, is a banding together of parts in support of a position or point of view. You don't need anyone's agreement to create a context. You don't need anything from anybody.

All you need to create a context is your Self. The Hunger Project is an alignment of Selves taking responsibility for creating a context.

Context, not content

The third generating principle of The Hunger Project is the one I've already discussed with you: the creation of a context, to cause the end of hunger and starvation on this planet in two decades to be an idea whose time has come. It can be done only within your Self.

And you create a context from what? From nothing. Within your Self and from nothing you create the space, "The end of hunger and starvation on the planet in two decades," and in that space you put all content and all process, and within the space, process is generated, which reorganizes and realigns the process and content. In that context, everything that happens in every moment is really the end of starvation manifesting itself. Each position that used to contribute to the pea soup now becomes a position manifesting itself as contributing to the end of starvation.

An idea transformed from content to context is an idea whose time has come. Create a context and you have mastery. I promise you that at the point in this project when you actually experience the context, "The end of hunger and starvation on the planet in two decades," you will experience a transformation in the quality of your own life. You will experience a kind of mastery that you have never experienced before.

I said mastery, not force. Many of us have a lot of force. Mastery requires no force. If everything is going vertically, what do you have to do to get something to go vertically? Nothing. Just do whatever you're doing.

Out of the context, "The end of hunger and starvation on the planet in two decades," sometime in the next month some opportunity to do something to make real the end of hunger and starvation on the planet will cross your path. Instead of interacting with it out of a position, you will be able to interact with the opportunity out of this context. Then, what you do will be wholly appropriate to the end of hunger and starvation.

A transformed space

The fourth generating principle of The Hunger Project is

A TRANSFORMATION

Off the coast of Japan are a number of tiny islands where resident populations of macaques have been under continuous observation for more than 20 years. The scientists provide supplementary food, but the monkeys also feed themselves by digging up sweet potatoes and eating them dirt and all. This uncomfortable practice continued unchanged for many years until one day a young male monkey broke with tradition and carried his potato down to the sea where he washed it before eating it. He taught the trick to his mother, who showed it to her current mate and so the culture spread through the colony until most of them, let us say 99 monkeys, were doing it. Then one Tuesday morning at eleven, the hundredth individual acquired the habit, and within an hour, it appeared on two other islands in two physically unconnected populations of monkeys who until that moment had shown no inclination to wash their food. I believe that ideas in human societies spread in the same kind of way and that when enough of us hold something to be true, then it becomes true for everyone.

Lyall Watson
foreword to *Rhythms of Vision*
by Lawrence Blair

the principle of transformation. I cannot predict exactly what will happen to end starvation on the planet. In fact, any prediction begins to place a limitation on what can occur.

If you and I were caterpillars talking about flight, can you imagine what the talk would sound like? "We don't have the power to fly. Caterpillars don't fly. They wiggle. We're too bulky and fat and we don't have wings. We can't do it."

To which someone might reply: "But if a caterpillar could fly, by what method do you suppose it would happen?" Don't you see that you can't answer that with a caterpillar mentality? Whatever answer you figure out comes from the limited condition; it is deduced from what already exists, that is, the form of the caterpillar. The creation of a context dissolves the limitations; it transforms the condition of unworkability and creates an opportunity for solutions to occur.

I talked to about 40,000 people in a series of presentations of The Hunger Project in September and October of 1977. Those 40,000 people experienced alignment and began to talk to tens of thousands of other people, who, in turn, will enroll tens of thousands of other people. Soon there will be over 100,000 people enrolled in The Hunger Project, people committed to causing the end of hunger and starvation in two decades to be an idea whose time has come.

We can predict what 100,000 people banded together in a movement, each doing his or her part, could do about hunger and starvation—but no one has ever seen 100,000 *aligned* people. No one can predict what 100,000 people can do who are aligned out of themselves, out of their individual sense of responsibility, out of being whole, out of being willing to create new contexts within themselves—within themselves as individuals, within themselves as relationship, within themselves as a group, within themselves as organization or institution, within themselves as society, within themselves as humankind. We have no idea what a group of 100,000 aligned people can do. And I say that any attempt to predict it limits it.

So I only predict miracles.

Twenty years from now, when we're looking back at how hunger and starvation ended, it will not look as if miracles had happened. Everyone will know how it happened. They will point to events that were pivotal, that made a difference. There will appear to be an obvious relationship between what was done and the logical consequences of what was done. The weather got better; there were bigger crops; this government changed; the president said that; the government did this; and it all resulted in the end of starvation on the planet. In retrospect, that's how miracles always appear to happen.

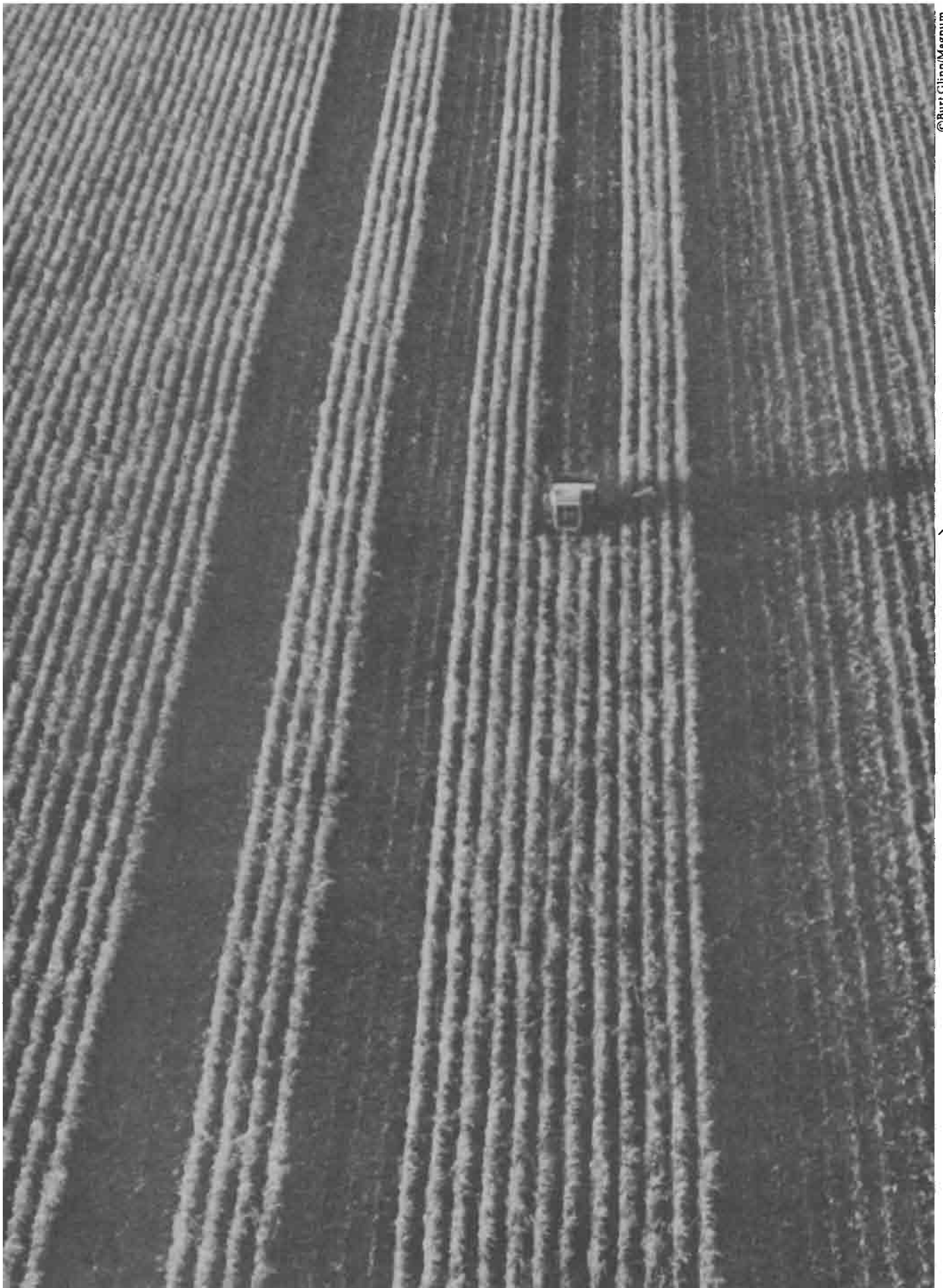
Butterflies can explain how caterpillars came to fly. ■

A SHIFT IN THE WIND

When people say, "Well, what do you think is going to happen with hungry folks?" I give them the answer that I've heard firefighters give when they're fighting a forest fire that's out of control. Someone would ask the Fire Marshal, "What's it look like?" and he would answer, "Well, if we don't get a shift in the wind, we can't save it." He didn't say we couldn't save it; he said, "It's out of our hands now."

I've always felt that if we didn't get a shift in the wind, we couldn't save it. But I left leeway for that universal God that controls all winds to step in. And I cannot tell you how I feel tonight, knowing that this is that shift in the wind.

Dick Gregory
Hunger Project presentation
Washington, D.C.
September 25, 1977



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The Hunger Project is not about any particular solution or group of solutions; rather, it is about creating the context in which old solutions can work and new solutions can appear. Here is a review of some solutions we already know about.

A catalogue of solutions

Roy Prosterman and Charles A. Taylor

from *Hunger, Poverty, Desperation, and Chaos*

Estimates are that at least 400 million people on the planet are seriously undernourished, and the number may be twice as great. This occurs because some 30 to 40 million tons of grain are not available each year where and when they are needed, and it occurs against the following broad background:

- Compared to the 30-40 million ton "shortage," we annually produce 1.2 billion tons of grain on the planet.
- We *could* produce 2.4 to 2.6 billion tons of grain.
- And, out of the 1.2 billion tons we *do* produce, an estimated 30 percent, or 360 million tons, are lost annually, chiefly to rats and insects, because of poor storage. A further 400 million tons are fed to animals producing milk, meat, and eggs for well-to-do countries.
- A further 50-100 million tons, although "eaten" by people in the poor countries, actually get consumed by the parasites that inhabit their intestinal tracts.

So what are the solutions? In the very short term, a partial solution is to use the well-off countries' existing food resources more rationally, at the same time building up world food reserves and making larger food-aid shipments wherever distribution problems can be solved. A shift from grain feeding to forage-grass feeding of beef cattle in the U.S. alone would, for example, release resources equal to the present shortage—but there would be problems in getting the food where it is needed. Even moderating the rate at which feeding of grain to animals is *increasing* in Russia, Europe, and America would go far toward meeting the deficit in a "balance-sheet" sense—and again we would have the problem of distribution.

In the mid to long term, the struggle must chiefly be won in the less-developed countries themselves.

There are four major models of solution that have been applied successfully (see map, pages 20-21):

- **Family farm**
- **Collectivized or cooperative agriculture**
- **Populist**
- **Grass-roots revenue**

Measures to increase agricultural productivity at the local level are probably the most promising of all, not only because

WHERE FOOD IS CHEAP

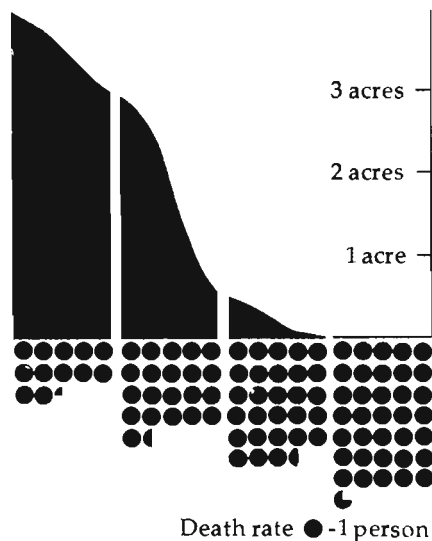
Although the [U.S. agricultural development] program was put together piecemeal over many decades, by and large instruments of policy were consciously devised to encourage the agricultural sector to expand its resources and increase its output. As a result of such conscious policy the consumer in the U.S., and to a lesser extent in the rest of the world, has realized a favorable price for food. By 1971 only 15.7 percent of the disposable income of the average American consumer was spent for food. (In 1975 that figure rose to 16.8 percent because of inflation, and it has remained there ever since.) By way of comparison, in developing countries in 1971 the average consumer spent 65 percent of his disposable income for food, in the USSR he spent 30 percent and in the countries of the European Economic Community he spent 26 percent.

Earl O. Heady

Scientific American, September 1976

SIGNS OF STRESS

Death rate in 1975
Companiganj, Bangladesh
by size of land holdings



(Source: The Johns Hopkins University School of Hygiene & Public Health, preliminary data.)

Even within a poor society, the poorest are the hardest hit. A classification of deaths in Companiganj for 1975 by the Johns Hopkins medical team showed that death rates differed profoundly according to the victims' land-owning status. The less land a family had, the less likely were all of its members to survive a food crisis. Death was a frequent visitor to that one-fourth of the population that owned no land at all.

A death rate of 36 within the landless group indicates extreme nutritional stress.

Those with three acres or more had a death rate of 12, only fractionally higher than that for those living in Western industrial countries. Perhaps the most disturbing message of these figures is what they portend for the future as population growth further reduces the average size of landholdings and swells the landless population.

Lester R. Brown
World Population Trends: Signs of Hope,
Signs of Stress, Worldwatch Paper No. 8
October 1976

food can thereby be produced exactly where the deficits exist, but also because the increased income to villagers can then permit them to undertake complementary measures, such as improving storage and developing village safe-water wells and a whole range of other farm and village land improvements, using their own resources. The potential for increasing productivity is tremendous. What we call "The Triumph of Lorenzo José" (see page 33) shows what *can* be done. Lorenzo José and some of his neighbors exemplify the **family farm** model, which means they own their own land and have basic small-owner support—access to credit, technical advice, extension and marketing support in the form of research, regional irrigation works, farm-to-market roads, warehousing, price floors.

Collectivized or cooperative agriculture has also shown that it can do quite well: East Germany produces only nine percent less wheat per hectare than West Germany, while North Korea appears to be as highly productive for rice as South Korea.

Small-owner or collectivized-ownership systems—and more readily the former—open the way for major productivity increases. A shift away from landlordism constitutes an absolutely necessary, but not by itself sufficient, condition for achieving such increases. Interestingly, *none* of the really "rich" countries has a landlord-dominated system of agriculture—which may say a lot about how they got to where they are.

To understand the process by which agricultural production is increased, it is necessary to go back to the fundamental fact that food production always combines three basic factors: land, labor, and inputs. The latter may be longer-term "capital" inputs which last for a number of years, or shorter-term "current" inputs.

The quality of these factors must, of course, be taken into account with their sheer quantity: the quality of the land, including the structure and nutrient content of the soil, and the amount of rainfall which it receives under natural conditions; the quality of the labor, including the degree of motivation to work carefully and long; and the quality and appropriateness of machines, irrigation works, and other long-term "capital" inputs, as well as the quality of the seeds, fertilizer and other shorter-term "current" inputs.

On-farm irrigation works are, in fact, the most crucial of all the improvement works needed for achieving productivity increases, and they are essential if a second crop is to be produced in the "dry" season. This means digging wells; leveling the land to an even flatness; digging ditches that will carry nearby irrigation water to the crops and permit drainage of excess waters in the rainy season; and building impoundment areas that can hold extra water.



THE TRIUMPH OF LORENZO JOSÉ

Lorenzo José is a farmer who has one hectare (a piece of land approximately twice the size of a football field) in the Philippines. There, as in India and Bangladesh, a hectare usually produces less than 2 tons of rice a year. By comparison, a hectare of Japan's intensively worked riceland, and the energy-intensive rice farms of Southern California, produce about 6 tons a year. Lorenzo José is getting 30 tons a year from his hectare.

What kind of miracle is farmer José working? He has the same amount of land as his neighbors, the same water, the same climate, and access to the same types of high-yielding seeds. To utilize his land more productively than his neighbors, José divides it into 100-square-meter plots and plans meticulously for the planting and harvesting of each. Every day, he gives at least one plot a fresh planting, fertilizing, weeding, or harvesting. He monitors all the plots for any sign of disease. Each plot goes through a complete cycle, from planting to harvesting, four times a year.

The weather is warm enough to allow constant vegetative growth, as long as there is irrigation beyond the June-to-October monsoon season. José husbands his water resources, carefully dispensing and rationing water to each plot, and monitoring drainage closely. Almost every day of the year, some of the crop goes to market. It is an understatement to say that the work is demanding: Lorenzo José takes only five days a year as "time off."

Lorenzo José's triumph is compounded out of two fundamental but simple elements: First, he owns the land he farms. Second, he has access to basic credit and technical and marketing support. Other farmers in the same area, following José's lead, get the same results. Ownership gives them the motivation to put in long hours, and to make extensive "sweat equity" improvements such as irrigation and drainage. The support facilities give them the wherewithal to acquire those things that "sweat" alone cannot create—such as fertilizer, insecticide, better seeds, and the technical know-how for their optimum use—plus the assurance

that their resulting crops can be profitably sold.

By contrast to these owner-farmers, their neighbors who produce roughly one-sixteenth as much are tenant farmers. Even where similar support facilities are available to them, there is little increase in the tenant farmers' productivity. Invariably, they fear making basic long-term improvements on the farm: The landlord might seize the fruits in increased rent, or seize the newly-improved land for himself, leaving the evicted tenant to fare as best he can.

There are other places (northern Portugal, for example) where small farmers own their land but don't have credit or technical or marketing support. Like the tenant farmer who has support but no land, their productivity is low.

Both are needed: ownership of the land, and the support to fulfill the promise that ownership brings. Where both are present, agricultural productivity shows marked gains. Where either is missing, production stagnates.

Roy Prosterman

DEFUSING THE POPULATION BOMB

The experience of the developed countries gave rise to the theory of the demographic transition. It holds that societies tend to move through three distinct demographic stages: 1. high birth rates and high death rates, resulting in near stationary populations; 2. high birth rates but declining death rates, producing growing populations; and finally, 3. low birth rates and low death rates, re-establishing near stationary populations.

The fundamental question is: What, if anything, can rationally and humanely be done to accelerate the demographic transition in the developing world? Is that acceleration realistically possible? It is.

... The importance of enhancing the status of women is critical. The number of illiterate females is growing faster than illiterate males.

Of all the aspects of social development, the educational level appears most consistently associated with lower fertility.

... Malnourished mothers give birth to weak and unhealthy infants, and have problems nursing them. Such infants often die, and this leads to frequent pregnancies, which in turn diminish [the parents'] occupational and economic status.

... But through an increase in income, small-farm families will almost certainly experience a beneficial decline in their traditionally high fertility. For the income will give them access to better health and education and living standards, which in turn are likely to lead to smaller families.

Robert S. McNamara
in *Time* magazine,
from a speech at Massachusetts
Institute of Technology

It is such crucial productivity-increasing improvements which *only* owners (whether family farmers or cooperativists) are willing to undertake, *never* tenants or hired laborers.

New technologies may help the motivated owner-farmers even more in the future: For example, the new "super slurper," made of a flour material which can absorb more than 1,000 times its weight in water, appears to be the cheapest and most promising water-mobilizing invention to date and is likely to be valuable to agriculture in the U.S. and abroad.

Other proven solutions to hunger besides the family farm and cooperative models are the **populist** model and the **grass-roots revenue** model. The populist model uses distribution of food via government action, and has worked in countries like Cuba, Argentina, and Uruguay. The grass-roots revenue model, which has usefully served countries like Portugal and Spain, and a series of island societies from Puerto Rico to Malta and Mauritius, has mostly been accomplished through massive tourism or through large-scale remittances of funds from compatriots working abroad.

Some countries represent several models simultaneously: Israel, for example, probably reflects elements of all four.

None of these models, however, can work alone. Any solution depends on basic preventive health care. Then the bowls begin to fill with food that is not shared with parasites or metabolized fighting disease. In what has now become a welcoming and supporting village setting other improvements take effect: family planning, basic education, the improvement of housing, and the generation of jobs.

A variety of new technologies may help to further support these successful models in the future—ranging from the "super slurper" to inexpensive methods of local-level storage to techniques for farming the oceans or getting the basic grains to "fix" their own nitrogen out of the atmosphere.

Other approaches have been tried which, historically, have not yet led to any successes:

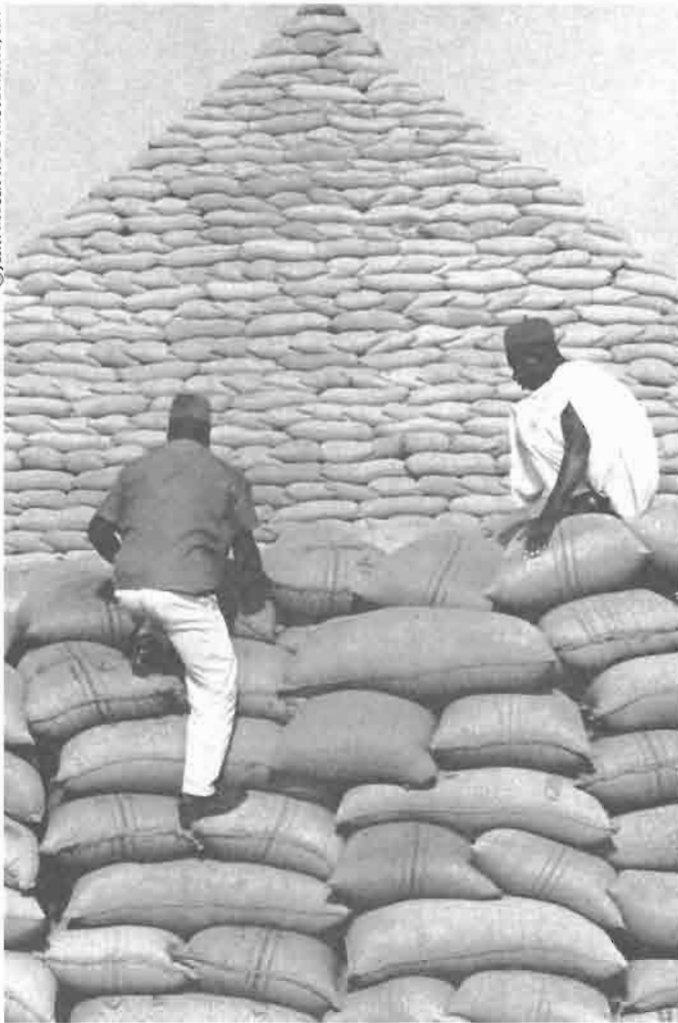
Industrialization: Too costly and often inappropriate. Typically, only a "favored few" reap any benefits. Saudi Arabia is currently attempting to use this model and it looks as if it might work for them, because of their vast financial resources.

Trade, not aid: Superficially attractive, encourages single-crop farming for export, does not feed the population.

Boy scoutism: This "medicine-and-blankets" approach makes the helper feel good, but does little long-term good.

Technology transfer: Done on the right scale, using the right kind of technology, it works. It is often inappropriate, substituting capital-equipment for labor and reducing employment, which eventually means more hungry people. ■

© John Moss/Photo Researchers, Inc.



MORE FOOD, FEWER CHILDREN

The rate of population growth does not increase when people are fed. In the long run, just the opposite happens.

People in the less developed countries don't have babies by "accident," or because they don't know how babies are made. When they have had enough, they are as capable—even in the absence of modern birth-control technologies—of practicing *coitus interruptus* or abortion as their Western European counterparts who started bringing down their own birth rates in the 19th century.

Consider the total of 65 million families of tenant farmers on all the continents, and the 35 million additional families of agricultural laborers, many of them living in areas where children under six years of age account for half of all deaths.

As they grow older and less capable of working long hours in the field, especially if the husband of the household should fall sick or grow frail, they can only look forward to eviction or dismissal. There are few old tenant farmers, and even fewer old agricultural laborers. For tens of millions of other families, the circumstances are equivalent.

How then are they to survive? The answer is simple: Having sons who *will* be able to work is the equivalent of old-age insurance. The woman becomes a child-bearing machine, forced to bear eight or nine children in an effort to have at least one surviving son who can take care of the parents in their old age.

What happens when conditions improve? With higher food productivity and reduced unemployment, with most people finding more food to put in their children's bowls, and more resources to spend on preventive health measures, parents come to realize that their well-nourished, healthy children are going to survive.

It is then that "insurance births" taper off and the birth rate drops substantially. And it is then that a welcoming context is created for the adoption of modern family planning.

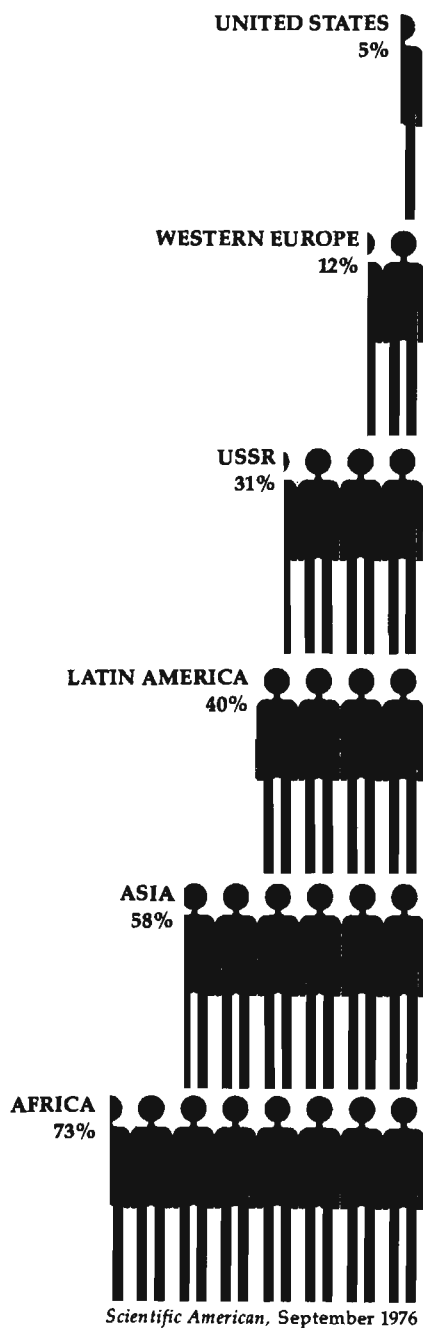
Roy Prosterman

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LABOR DOWN, OUTPUT UP

The United States has reduced the percentage of its total labor force on farms from 72 percent 150 years ago to 5 percent now. Yet productivity per American farm worker has increased enormously: In 1920 each farmer fed 17 people, and today feeds 135 people in the U.S. and abroad. A comparison of percentages of labor force on the land in different parts of the world is shown below.



What the U.S. has done so far

Some 64 years ago, work began in the United States to end hunger on the planet. The first push was Belgian Relief—which soon became a general European Relief effort—from 1914 to 1923. The second great push came with the Marshall Plan after World War II. Each represented the work of hundreds, or at most a few thousand, committed people; largely through them, more than half of the problem of hunger has been solved.

Herbert Hoover, later to become President of the United States, organized food relief for Belgium in August 1914, just after the outbreak of World War I. His food-saving tactics—meatless days, wheatless days—gave rise to the word “Hooverize,” meaning to conserve food. With Hoover as head of the U.S. Food Administration, the relief operation was extended to most of Europe when the war ended. During those years, we gave four times as much assistance, relative to our gross national product, as we give today.

The end of World War II in 1945 found Europe devastated again. When George C. Marshall (who had been overall commander of the U.S. war effort) became Secretary of State in 1947, the European Recovery Program began a four-year run that pumped over \$11 billion into Europe’s economy in food, machinery, and products.

The purpose of the program that came to bear Marshall’s name was, in Marshall’s words, to work “not against any country or doctrine, but against hunger, poverty, desperation and chaos.” In its time we gave about six times as much assistance, relative to our gross national product, as we give today.

Although anti-communist government policies at the beginning of the Cold War helped to obtain funding for the Marshall Plan, the energy for the entire operation came from the personal commitment of individuals across the nation. People organized their churches, their unions, their business and civic organizations. Large resources for publicity and education were marshaled behind the Plan. A registered lobby was set up in Washington. Congressmen reluctant to vote for funds got a barrage of letters. As Adam B. Ulam of Harvard has written, “This was an impressive example of how an idea conceived by a few enlightened minds, yet clashing with the longstanding tradition and whole temper of American politics, could gain—through entirely democratic processes and public debate—a decisive hold on the majority of citizens.”

A final push to end the rest of hunger on this planet could be this generation’s present to ourselves and to the generations that will follow the millennium.

John Poppy

Talking to your government

One day in 1969, while waiting to see a Massachusetts Congressman, I asked an aide who was opening his mail, "What's the issue of the day?"

"Whew! Anti-ballistic missiles," she replied.

"How many letters did you get about it?"

"Ten!" she exclaimed.

Ten letters in one day in one Congressional office can put an issue at the top of a Representative's priority list. Having worked closely with officials in Washington, I have observed at close hand the powerful relationship that *can* exist between elected officials and their constituents.

I am also aware that officials often feel isolated from the insights of constituents. This is hardly surprising—statistics indicate that less than one percent of Americans communicate with those persons we have elected to serve us.

Of course, not every letter that is written is going to be read by the person to whom it is addressed, and often a form letter is sent in reply. But don't think that your communication is "lost." A record is kept of the pros and cons of all issues, and sample letters are brought to the attention of the official.

Letters typed on business stationery seem to carry greater weight, but personal letters—not form letters but individual expressions—also have influence. Senator Wendell Anderson (D-Minnesota) has said that when he gets personally written letters from a dozen constituents he moves that issue up to the front burner very quickly.

Personal visits with legislators can be especially effective, either in Washington or at their home offices. Make an appointment or stop by. Find out if your Representative has an aide assigned to the subject of world hunger. Ask to see both the Representative and the aide together. If the Representative, or Senator, is unavailable, the aide can follow through. Senator Anderson says that if as many as four or five people in his home district come to see him regarding a single issue, then that subject is given his full attention and priority.

Support your Senator or Congressperson by assisting with research, speech writing, with whatever ability you can share. Invite him or her to attend Hunger Project community meetings to explore the project in depth. When we approach legislators in the spirit of supporting them to be effective, our role as constituent-partners becomes one of participating *with* them, rather than leaving them adrift on the raft of "authority."

Your letter, your visit, are your continuing vote. Make sure it is counted.

Joan McKinney

OUR DAILY BREAD

... the world is producing each day two pounds of grain, or more than 3,000 calories, for every man, woman, and child on earth. 3,000 calories is about what the average American consumes. And this estimate is minimal. It does not include the many other staples such as beans, potatoes, cassava, range-fed meat, much less fresh fruits and vegetables.

Frances Moore Lappé
and Joseph Collins
Food First: Beyond the Myth of Scarcity

A REALITY TEST

There is a way to tell if hunger is being eliminated: Check the infant and early childhood mortality figures. If what we are doing is working, the statistics for deaths among children in their first two years will drop significantly. In countries where data are poor or not up-to-date, this can be easily remedied with current, random-sample surveys that will tell us what is happening as it is happening.

Roy Prosterman

CHICKENS AND HUMANS

i have noticed that when chickens quit quarreling over their food they often find that there is enough for all of them i wonder if it might not be the same with the human race

Donald Robert Perry Marquis
archy's life of mehitabel (1933) random thoughts by archy

For further information: Publications, Organizations and Films

Publications

By Bread Alone

Lester R. Brown with Erik P. Eckholm. Praeger Publishers, 1974.

Describes the dimensions of hunger in the '70s, and the ecological undermining of our food systems. Discusses alternative solutions: viz., the Green Revolution, fisheries, non-conventional food sources.

The Challenge of World Poverty

Gunnar Myrdal. Random House, 1970.

Contains policy recommendations that Myrdal omitted from his major work, *The Asian Drama*. Analyzes the effects of trade agreements, agriculture, land tenure, international finance and education. Includes problems in the United States.

Diet For a Small Planet

Frances Moore Lappé. Ballantine, 1971.

Shows how meatless lifestyle can provide a healthy diet while saving vital food resources. Includes recipes.

Employment, Growth, and Basic Needs: A One-World Problem

International Labor Office, 1976.

A collection of papers dealing with the effects of a "basic needs" strategy on world employment and economic growth.

The Food and People Dilemma

George Borgstrom. Duxbury Press, 1974.

Describes the problems of feeding an expanding world population. Questions the usefulness of technological innovation alone. Has an environmental perspective.

Food First: Beyond the Myth of Scarcity

Frances Moore Lappé and Joseph Collins. Houghton Mifflin Company, 1977.

Concludes that there is indeed more than enough land in the world to produce more than enough food. Stresses that land reform and political action are the way to realizing success. Parallels *How the Other Half Dies* by Susan George.

The Home of Man

Barbara Ward. W.W. Norton & Co., 1976.

Describes how fundamental decisions made in areas like hunger, pollution control, natural resources and energy will have far-reaching effects. Stresses the interdependence of the problems with human settlements, suggesting a new economic order as a way of satisfying all of humankind.

Ho-Ping: Food for Everyone

Medard Gabel. To be published in 1978.

A comprehensive inventory of food resources, present food production, and its potential. Uses Buckminster Fuller's dymaxion approach to world mapping and the World Game Workshop. Written from the context of sufficiency and abundance, illustrating throughout that there are more than enough resources and food to feed everyone.

Hunger, U.S.A.

Report by the Citizens' Board of Inquiry into Hunger and Malnutrition in the United States, 1968.

A thorough study of hunger, malnutrition and human needs in the United States. Concludes that, in 1968, the U.S. faced a problem which affected 10 million Americans. (This report helped considerably in the birth of the Food Stamp Program.)

In the Human Interest

Lester R. Brown. W.W. Norton & Co., 1974.

An analysis of the ecological stresses involved in maintaining a world population substantially larger than the present one. Offers a strategy to stabilize the world's population at a reasonable level. Suggests that now is the time to act.

Also on the relationship between social and economic progress and success in Family Planning, see *Accelerating Population Stabilization Through Social and Economic Progress* by Robert S. McNamara. Overseas Development Council, Development Paper 24, August 1977.

Losing Ground

Erik P. Eckholm. W.W. Norton & Co., 1976.

Describes various problems in food production, ranging from the lessons of the Dust Bowl and deforestation to encroaching deserts and problems of tropical soils. Relates the growth of food to ecological trends in the earth's history and suggests a holistic approach to food production.

The Politics of World Hunger

Paul and Arthur Simon. Harper's Magazine Press, 1973.

A discussion of the problem of world hunger and its solutions written from a public policy perspective, urges a "grass roots" political effort in the U.S. as the first step in any solution to the problem.

Reaping the Green Revolution

Sudhir Sen. Orbis Books, 1975.

Focuses on India, but deals generally with the problems and potential of agriculture in the less developed countries. Stresses need for a systematic approach to food production.

A Richer Harvest—New Horizons for Developing Countries

Sudhir Sen. Orbis Books, 1974.

Fairly technical treatment of the prospects for vastly increased world food production. Urges rich and poor countries to join in collective effort. Stresses technology.

Small is Beautiful—Economics as if People Mattered

E.F. Schumacher. Harper & Row, 1973.

Argues the case for appropriate low-energy technology coupled with the employment of hand labor in lieu of capital-intensive, energy-intensive approaches to development.

World Food and Nutrition Study: The Potential Contributions of Research

National Academy of Sciences, 1977. Examines closely the socio-economic aspects of the problem, and affirms the feasibility of ending hunger and starvation on the planet before the end of the century.

Worldwatch Paper No. 2, The Politics and Responsibility of the North American Breadbasket

Lester R. Brown. Worldwatch Institute, 1975.

Sets out the critical dependence of the world on U.S. and Canadian grain exports and outlines problems such as the declining yields in North America and the instability of world grain markets. Describes the results of the Green Revolution.

Organizations

Who's Involved With Hunger: An Organization Guide

American Freedom from Hunger Foundation and World Hunger Education Service, 1976.

A listing of more than 200 "anti-hunger" organizations, with addresses and names of principal officers. Its purpose is to be "educational rather than encyclopedic," to encourage further inquiry by readers.

Films

Hunger

Animation, 1973.

Satire of self-indulgence in a hungry world. Available through Canadian Consulate film libraries.

Hunger in America

CBS-TV documentary, 1968.

Influenced Congress to reexamine domestic hunger. Available for rent from Carousel Films, 1501 Broadway, New York, NY 10036.

Hunger in Mississippi

WLBT-TV documentary, 1977.

Details hunger in rural Mississippi and the inadequacies of the Food Stamp Program. Lays particular emphasis on diseases related to malnutrition. For details write to: Kaye Fortenberry, WLBT, 715 S. Jefferson Street, Jackson, MS 39205.

The Hungry Planet

Documentary, 1977.

Focuses on solutions to world hunger, with emphasis on long-term self-sufficiency via land reform and complementary small-farmer support. Also looks at recent Congressional action to improve aid program, to move it towards "earth aid." Write: The Hunger Project, 765 California Street, San Francisco, CA 94108.

It's our planet, and our Hunger Project

The Hunger Project is not mine or even, strictly speaking, yours. It is the Self's project. As my Self, I know that I am responsible for the end of hunger and starvation on this planet. I know that my Self can matter. And out of that experience, I know that your Self can matter.

When we clear away the myths, arguments and positions around hunger, we see clearly that what is required is a transformation of the condition in which the problem and its solutions are held. This transformation is The Hunger Project.

The work that resulted in The Hunger Project began four years ago. After considerable research and discussions with authorities such as Buckminster Fuller, Roy Prosterman and other experts on world hunger, the project was formally presented at the February 1977 meeting of the *est* Advisory Board. The *est* Foundation took responsibility for bringing The Hunger Project into existence as initial custodian for those to whom the project actually belongs.

A series of Hunger Project presentations in 11 United States cities in September and October 1977 and a nationwide fast on November 14th, 1977, were conceived as a contribution from the *est* organization to The *est* Foundation's work in establishing the project. As elements of the establishing phase, the presentations and the fast were designed to allow people to experience themselves as source of The Hunger Project.

It is *our* project. It is *your* project wholly, totally, in a way that allows it to be *my* project wholly and totally in a way that allows it to be *their* project wholly and totally. It isn't "My project and you can't have it." It is "My project and you can have it all." As a matter of fact, this project will not really belong to you until you give it away.

As The Hunger Project develops, you will discover ways in which you can contribute to creating the end of starvation—ranging from expanding your own awareness of the problem and its solutions, to visiting people in government, to communicating The Hunger Project to others, to formal participation in specific programs and activities. There are no rules about expressing your participation in The Hunger Project. This source document on our ability to end hunger within 20 years is intended as a reminder that the answer to "What are you going to do?" is to look inside yourself and see what to do. An important aspect of the project is the space it creates for a process of discovering ways in which the end of starvation will become a reality. You answer the question, "What can I do?" out of the context that the project creates.

It is our planet, and our Hunger Project.

Werner Erhard

Precisely because the impact of starvation on our lives is so great, its existence is actually an opportunity...

In experiencing the truth underlying hunger, one comes to realize that the ordinarily unnoticed laws that determine the persistence of hunger on this planet are precisely the laws that keep the world from working.

One comes to realize that the principles of the end of hunger and starvation within 20 years are the very principles necessary to make our world work.



You make the difference