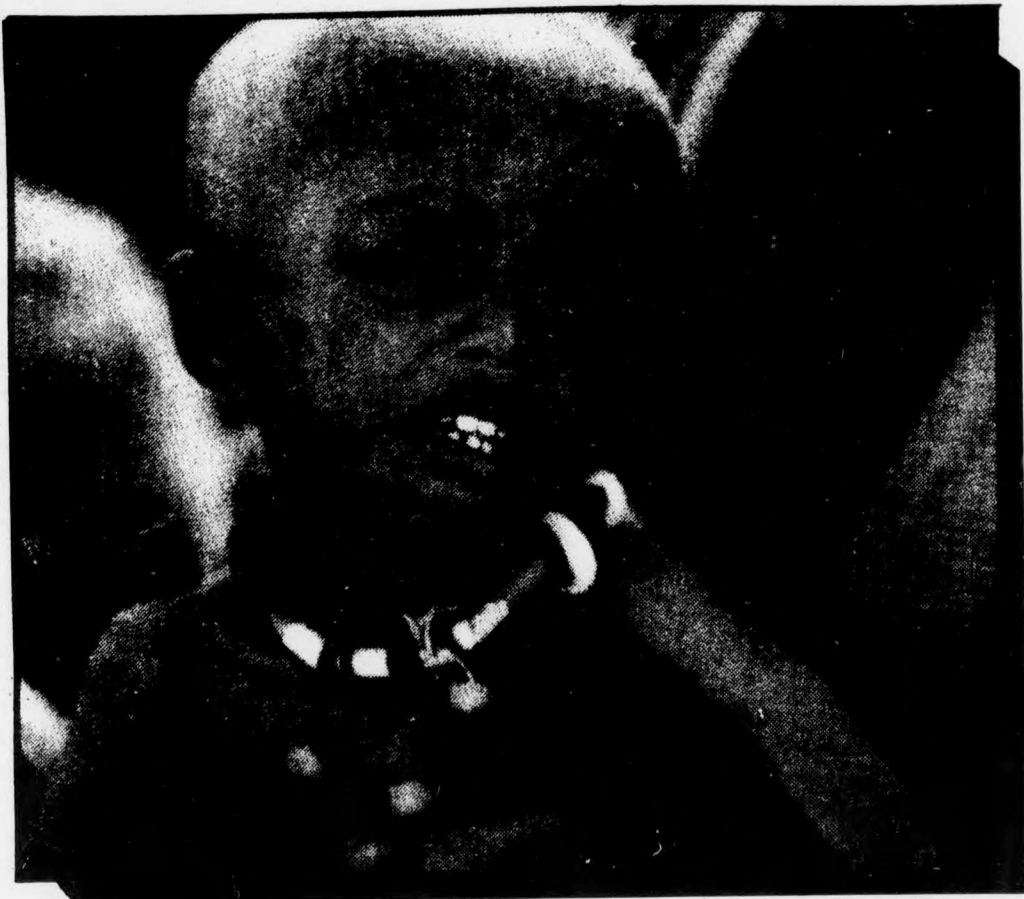


Tragedy in Ethiopia



This has been due to both a federal government "cheap food" policy, and, more importantly, the growth of corporate concentration in the Canadian food system; in corporations (often multinationals), whose interests in agriculture are not in producing food for people, but food for profit. These corporations have the power to control the price a farmer receives for his product (through their control of the processing and wholesaling industries), and, at the same time, they have the power to largely dictate the price which consumers will pay for their food (through their stranglehold upon the marketing structures such as the supermarkets).

Inevitably, it is the poor in Canada who suffer — either being forced from the land as corporate control of agriculture increases, or as those who are unable to afford the price that is charged for food. Despite the overflowing supermarket shelves in Canada, there are hundreds of thousands of Canadians (if not millions) who just cannot afford to nourish themselves adequately. It is estimated by the various soup kitchens in Toronto, for instance, that 100,000 people in that city go to bed hungry every night. And it has been calculated that if all social benefits such as welfare and unemployment insurance were suddenly removed in Canada, there would be widespread famine.

The point is that our reaction to the tragedy in Ethiopia has been much too narrow and even shallow. Following the mass media's interpretation of events and causes, most people have been unable to go beyond a charitable response to the suffering (indeed, this is the response that is encouraged by the mass media). But while charity is necessary and important in situations such as these, it can never be more than a "band-aid" solution. By focusing on charity, we have generally been unable to perceive the real causes of hunger and starvation, whether it be in Ethiopia or Canada, and have thus done little towards any lasting solution of the problem.

It is regrettable that the controversy over Ethiopia at UNB/STU was largely confined to a "band-aid" solution, for we have, at UNB/STU, the means to move beyond charity. We, at university, have access to knowledge — knowledge that, like the information contained in this article, can point the way to a real and just solution to the problem of hunger and starvation in this world.

It is the responsibility of those who are more fortunate, such as people attending university, to seek after that knowledge, and not merely to use university as a way to find a comfortable place in society. It is our obligation to make that commitment — and to work for justice, in Canada and abroad — since we have so much, and others, like the starving in Ethiopia and elsewhere, have so little.

Sources used:

(and which would provide a good starting point for those interested in exploring the topic further)

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and even starve because they do not have to grow their own food, or they cannot pay for available food. That access to food and is restricted by those who control the food it is the governments of different countries, rural policies promote both the growing of export instead of food on the available "cheap food" for urban consumers which leaves people in poverty. It is also often the "food" no, in controlling the movement of food, use the "cheap food" policy to exploit the at the same time manipulating the prices to as to achieve a higher profit. In any case, who lose out, whether they be farmers

unable to survive on the land by growing food, or those who are just unable to afford the prices charged for the available food.

This whole process of restricted access to both food-producing resources such as land, and to food itself, is not peculiar to the countries of the Third World. In Canada, for instance, there has been an increasing trend over the past few decades away from the growing of basic foods towards the production of specialized cash crops for export. In 1978, Canada imported (if we subtract grains and oilseeds), \$1.8 billion of food more than it exported. At the same time as we have become dependent upon imported food, one-half of our farmers, or more than 320,000 since 1951, have been forced to leave the land.