



FOOD SECURITY

The ability of all the world's people to meet their basic human needs has been an ongoing concern of Canadians. The first of these needs is food. Despite data to the contrary, Canadians have often been led to think that there is insufficient food to meet global dietary requirements. Yet statistics clearly reveal that hunger exists because of poverty - it is an economic, not a food issue.

It is a complex question and solutions include reassessing land ownership and use, wages for agricultural and non-agricultural workers, terms of trade between and within nations, control of agricultural inputs, such as seeds and pesticides, and access to institutional credit.

The goal of ensuring food security for the human family is challenging. It requires the transformation of historic economic patterns so as to incorporate relationships that are socially just, attentive to the interdependent nature of national economics and built upon life styles that are ecologically sound. Ensuring food security is no longer a food issue but, instead, the challenge of making a good idea good politics.

ORGANIZING THE UNORGANIZED

Producing food without ensuring the ability of the poor to buy that same food is like producing a new car without proper roads - all bright and shiny with nowhere to go. Food exists for all, but often the workers who produce the food cannot afford to buy it. Malnutrition therefore continues to be the scourge of all mankind. Wealthy groups, especially in the developed countries, still grow fat, while poor workers, particularly the unorganized, continue to be undernourished and even starve to death.

Organizing the unorganized in the rural sector is a great challenge for trade unions, particularly in poor countries. High illiteracy, low population density, miserable wages and old traditions are formidable challenges. Official resistance from rural landlords sometimes makes it impossible to group workers together

World Foo

for mutual benefit. The seasonal nature of the work, and the workers often being nomadic, compound the difficulties. Despite these obstacles, success stories do exist where many rural workers enjoy a fair share of the fruits of the labour.

As well as providing a market for food production, rural workers must also participate in the planning, preparation and implementation of agricultural projects. Attuned to the ups and downs of climate, soil, markets and inputs, only they can increase productivity to its maximum. New technology cannot exist in a vacuum but must harness what exists. Change initiated from the bottom up is far more effective than orders given from the top down.

Food is primary in the basic needs approach to development. Once the questions of organizing rural workers and participating in the production process are addressed, then the complementing questions of food aid, reserve food stocks, technology and land reform can be followed.

LAND TO THE TILLERS

In many Third World countries where agriculture forms the basis of the economy, most people own little or no land.

This situation has its roots in the establishment of colonial power and the formation of agricultural estates to produce crops for export. A minority of rich elite and foreign-owned companies now hold the majority of the best land.

Ownership by a few ensures a cheap agricultural labour force which is dependent on meagre wages for their survival.

The independence of many Third World countries has not changed their economic situation because these nations still rely on cash crop exports to buy imports of food, agricultural supplies and manufactured items.

The only way people will be fed is if the use of land is determined by the needs of the community as a whole. The "tillers" must have a share in the power that comes from owning land and a role in decisions on its use.

Land reform is fundamental to eliminating malnutrition and hunger in the world.

The problems will continue as long as the



elite n
need
trol of

Of th
in No
artich
here,
called
seed
World
siste
aston
divers
disea
and to

With
absen
facilit
ing. A
cludin
tent p
the pl
to a h
ty: Pr
Tra
chem
dusin
ductio
thus i
tional
An
the w
public

A d
wom
food
Conse
thous
signif
Wo
work
family
As a
wome