

World Hunger Project attacks starvation

By Ed LaPierre

Famine is the most dramatic and visible manifestation of hunger and starvation on our planet. Yet of the 15 to 20 million people who die each year as a result of hunger, relatively few are victims of actual famines. Famine, like hunger is an unnecessary tragedy.

Throughout history, humanity has been ravaged by famine.

There is no complete worldwide historical record of famines, yet their frequency can be glimpsed by the fact that in China alone, 1,828 famines were recorded in the past 2000 years. Since World War II there has been at least one famine occurring somewhere on earth each year. Famines are caused by both natural disasters (droughts, floods, crop diseases) and man-made disasters (war, revolution, civil disorders), and results in crop failures and shortages of food.

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VICTORY BY STARVATION

War has been the most frequent cause of famine in the past 40 years. In Europe in the 1940s, in India in the 1950s, in Bangladesh, Biafra and Ethiopia in the 1970s. During wars, armies seldom starve because they take their provision from noncombatants. Starvation is a tool of the aggressor in war.

In the Civil War in Nigeria in 1967 and 1968, the national government would not allow food to be shipped or trucked into Biafra which had declared its independence from Nigeria. A similar situation existed in Cambodia. The Vietnamese government ruled out truck convoys of relief on the grounds that they might fall into the hands of their enemy the Khmer Rouge.

DROUGHT COMMON CAUSE

Of the natural disasters that result in crop failures, drought has historically been the most

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frequent course of famine, occurring most often in areas where the average annual rainfall is already low.

The most devastating drought of this century took place between 1968-1974 in the sub-Saharan region of Africa known as the Sahel. During the last two years of the drought, hundreds of

thousands of Sahel's nomad tribespeople and their animals died of starvation, their nomadic culture permanently damaged.

Civil war and a natural disaster combined to create the great famine of 1974 in Bangladesh. After three years of brutality, destructive war and civil disturbances, a great flood destroyed the rice lands. Food prices skyrocketed and although there was enough rice and grain stored to feed everyone, the poor could not afford to purchase food and hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of people, starved to death.

The effects of famine on a society, and their culture, are tragic, traumatic and horrifying. Young children and old people are the first to die. In 1978 13 million children under the age of 5 died from starvation. Today, twenty-eight people starve to death every minute of every hour of every

day of every year. Twenty one of those people are children. This death rate is equivalent to a Hiroshima every three days. Fifteen to 20 million of us will die each year as a result of hunger and malnutrition. That breaks down to 41,000 per day.

MYTH OF HELPLESSNESS

It would appear that we can assume hunger and starvation to be a part of life and we in the industrialized world are doomed to watch it daily on our colour T.V. Well this is a myth. Starvation need not be seen as a tradition which cannot be changed by us.

Everyone knew once that man would never fly.

When courageous people challenged old traditional beliefs they discovered a new idea whose time had come.

Many people today are saying that putting an end to starvation is such an idea — whose time has come. These people have come together to form what is known as "The

World Hunger Project". The hunger project came into existence on February 14th 1977 and now has an enrolment of over 1 million people. Its main goal is to develop a process which will remove starvation from our planet Earth.

Since the Second World War, 32 countries with more than 1.6 billion people — 40

per cent of the planet's population, have eliminated hunger as a basic issue. When the populations of the long developed countries are added, the total comes to more than 2.1 billion people who have brought about an end to starvation. This is not to say that nobody is hungry in the countries who have eliminated starvation. It does mean that living standards have changed and starvation no longer dominates the lives of the people.

There is no shortage of food. Three thousand calories per person is now being produced for every person on earth, but because of distribution of resources only a small percentage of people get the food.

There are enough resources and know-how to grow enough, store enough, distribute enough, to provide enough food for every person on earth to be nutritionally self-sufficient from now on.

We know the causes of global hunger. We know the cures. We know what needs to be done.

ALTERNATIVES TO MEAT

For more than two thousand years, foods made from soybeans have provided most of the protein consumed by the people of East Asia, one-quarter of the world's population. Recently soy protein foods: tofu, miso and tempeh, have become increasingly

popular in the United States and Canada. This growing trend may have significant implications for the hungry of the world. Low-cost, high-quality soy protein, far more abundant than animal protein, holds great promise for meeting the protein needs of people throughout the world. It offers:

- optimum land use — an

eases, and can grow without irrigation or fertilizer. In fact, the plants' root nodules extract nitrogen from the air and fix it into the soil, a natural fertilizing process. In addition to these reasons, soy foods are versatile and delicious and can be produced easily in low technology, cottage type industries.

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acre of soybeans produces up to three times as much usable protein as an acre of any conventional crop and up to twenty times as much as if the land were used to raise beef or grow their fodder.

- harvest cost — soybeans are presently the least expensive protein source in the world.

- high nutritional value — soybeans are an excellent source of key nutrients and are also low in calories.

- hardy and adaptive — soybeans grow in a wide range of soil and climate conditions, are resistant to pest and dis-

WORLD STRATEGY RECOMMENDED

The Brandt Commission recommended that an emergency program having four elements all of equal importance should start now to eliminate starvation. First, the report says, there should be a large-scale transfer of resources to developing countries. Second, there should be an international energy strategy, and third, a global food program. Finally, a start should be made on some major reforms in the international economic system.

