

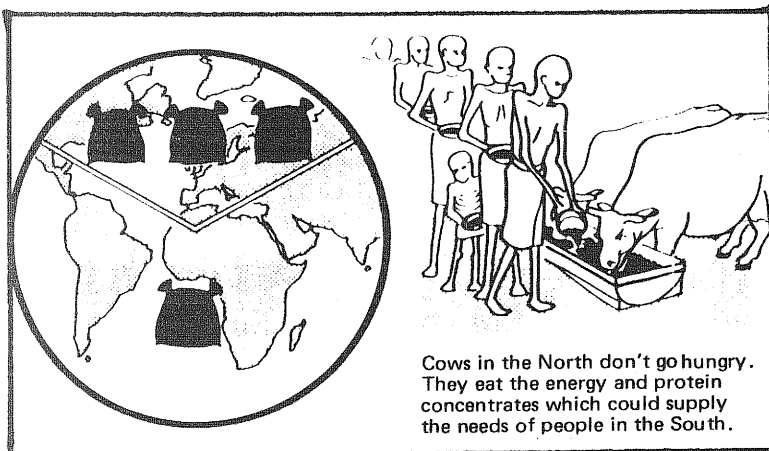
FOOD

PACSA FACTSHEET

29

"The generosity of the earth allows us to feed all mankind; we know enough about ecology to keep the Earth a healthy place; there is enough room on the Earth, and there are enough materials so that everybody can have adequate shelter; we are quite competent to produce sufficient supplies of necessities so that no one need live in misery. Above all we shall see that the economic problem is a convergent problem that has been solved already; we know how to provide enough and do not require any violent, inhuman, aggressive technologies to do so. There IS no economic problem and, in a sense, there never has been. But there is a moral problem, and moral problems are not convergent, capable of being solved so that future generations can live without effort; no, they are divergent problems which have to be understood and transcended."

*From A GUIDE FOR THE PERPLEXED
BY E.E. Schumacher.*



Is there really enough for all?

It is a fact that enough grain is grown in the world to provide everyone with enough protein and calories (3 000 calories per person per day). It is NOT true that there is not enough food for all.

Every country in the world has the resources necessary for its people to free themselves from hunger.

It takes 1 000 tons of vegetable food to produce one ton of beef.

3.5 kg of soybeans and grain fed to livestock produces only around 0.5 kg of meat.

Beans contain as much protein as meat and a field of beans will produce 1 000 times more than a field of cattle.

— from FOOD FIRST: BEYOND THE MYTH OF SCARCITY and WORLD HUNGER: 10 MYTHS
both by Frances Moore Lappe and Joseph Collins.

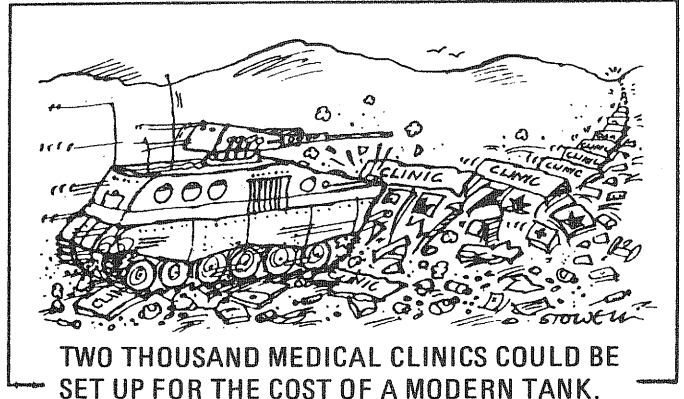
PACSA

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Reasons for hunger

In many of the poorer countries the people have been dispossessed of their land and multi-national corporations produce luxury food such as tobacco, tea, coffee, sugar. There is then no food for the local population to eat.

Therefore redistributing food is not sufficient. What is needed is the redistribution and democratization of control over what food is produced.



TWO THOUSAND MEDICAL CLINICS COULD BE SET UP FOR THE COST OF A MODERN TANK.

Money which could be spent on producing staple foods is spent on armaments – e.g. South Africa's official defence budget was 6,683 Billion rand for 1987. This amounts to over 18 Million rand per day.

The arms trade is a major cause of world poverty and war makes a country poor just as poverty can be one of the factors leading to war.

Poor countries spend three times as much on arms as they receive in aid.

—FOOD factsheet, Christian Aid, London.

Food for Thought

The finest aid that starving and deprived people can receive is not short-term charity but long-term assistance designed to create self-help and ultimate independence.

Karlheinz Bohm, a popular West German film and television actor, has installed an irrigation system similar to the age-old method used by the ancient Egyptians at Erer Farm near Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where 1 900 people were threatened with starvation. They have produced onions, potatoes, paw-paws, aubergines, etc. in such quantity that all have enough to eat and are even able to trade their surplus crop. Mr Bohm says that since the project started he is a changed man with totally different priorities.

If one man can instigate such a programme what relief could be achieved by affluent governments?

SUNDAY STAR, Dec. 14, 1985.

“There is no such thing as ‘my’ bread. All bread is ours and is given to me, to others through me, and to me through others, for not only bread but all things necessary for sustenance in this life are given on loan to us with others, and because of others, and for others, and to others through us.”

— Meister Eckhart, 13th century Christian mystic.

What can we do?

If hunger is caused by an unfair system which denies people their right to the land, jobs and other resources needed to feed themselves, then hunger can be ended by ordinary people like us taking steps within our reach to make that system more fair.

Use every opportunity to learn how and why one quarter of all people are denied minimum necessities for a decent life. If we understand the roots of hunger we will know that no one act of charity will make a big difference.

Check out why there are hungry people in your community, and as you learn tell others to write letters to newspapers, M.P.'s, inform your church and other organisations.

A Christian Response

Biblically we can see two complementary responses to poverty and hunger. The immediate concern is to show compassion to the stranger, the poor, the widow, and the orphan. (Ex.2: 21f; Deut. 14:29, 24:17, 27:19; Is. 1:17, 58:6f; Jer. 7:6; Jas. 1:27). This is reinforced by Jesus' teaching that when we give bread to the hungry we are really giving it to him (Mt.25:31-46).

However the Bible links such compassionate acts with an awareness of the underlying causes of poverty. Biblically poverty is often linked with injustice and exploitation (Is. 10:1-4; Mic; 2:2; Jer. 5:26-29; Am. 2:6ff.). Furthermore, the Jewish concept of a Jubilee year which involved the redistribution of land every fifty years, was a recognition of the need to redistribute not only food, but also the means of food production (Lev.25).