

From Local Ag Teachers:



Thoughts in Passing



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Am I My
Brother's Keeper???

Recently the world focused its attention on Rome for what developments might emerge from the World Food Conference. The conference was called by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger over a year ago. The purpose of this conference was to discuss what could be done with the problems arising from the critical shortage of food in the world.

The United States was represented by Secretary Kissinger and Secretary of Agriculture, Earl Butz as well as numerous other interested groups. The 1,000 delegates from over 100 countries heard how the U.S. has spent over \$25 billion in food aid in just the last 20 years, which stands second to no other country in aid. The response from the delegates was less than cheerful or thankful. For example, our close neighbor to the south, Mexico, represented by the Mexican President placed both the blame and burden on the United States for the world's present condition. Rene Dumant, a French scientist stated it this way, "The over consumption of meat famishes the poor. In eating hamburger, the rich whites (Americans) are indirect cannibals". That sounds like pretty strong language from a country that has received as much aid as any in Western Europe.

In a recent Farm Journal Magazine (December 1974), the editor's opinion is summed up well concerning the World Food Conference. The U.S. was pictured in the

Roman Arena (alone) to face off with the lions aptly labeled "blame", "ram-paging birth rates", and "starving millions." After all that the U.S. has done, it is hard to swallow comments that emerge from the World Food Conference. Not only has the U.S. provided food, but the many other programs like The Peace Corps, Aid for International Development, and the many church organizations have provided financial, technical, medical, and economic assistance; all directly from the United States.

American agriculture is without a doubt, "the most productive, the most capital intensive, the most highly-mechanized, and altogether the most industrial of all modern industries" states analyst Peter Drucker. American agriculture has done the almost impossible in achieving fantastic yield of grain and production efficiency. American agriculture has utilized its know how in developing the greatest country in the world. But can she feed the whole world??? That is very large question when we consider that two-thirds of the world's people are malnourished or undernourished; 10,000 people die each day in parts of Africa; transportation of food to some of these areas is almost impossible because of no organized transportation system; and the major problems encountered in actual distribution of food on large scale basis. And yet, the United States is largely blamed for the food shortage around the world.

India has 50 percent more cattle than the United States

does, yet they starve to death because they won't eat the animals. We are asked to give our grains to India to feed their poor while their cattle walk over their own grain and do very little about it. Can America be blamed for this situation???

Dr. Philip Handler, - President of the National Academy of Science has stated, "Assistance which barely keeps people alive and hungry will lead to more population growth and tragedy later." Instead of using half-way measures of solving starvation in parts of the world, he suggests we just write off some countries like in South East Asia as "hopeless" and concentrate our efforts on helping other countries. This attitude makes us ask, Does he think he is God? One of the countries that seems to be in dire need of assistance is Bangladesh. The population is 80 million, which is the eighth largest in the world. Recent floods have put the country up against the wall of starvation. Their crops were destroyed, cattle gone, and hope is dwindling. If the following description is revolting, so is the condition of the people there. "One little four-year old boy weighed 12 pounds. His spinal cord all but pushed itself through the rubbery skin of his deformed back. A desperate, destitute family of four recklessly throw their bodies before an onrushing train. A mother of six adds rat poison to meal of rice, ending the misery of another hopeless family. A little boy searches for some morsel of food, finding a soggy crust of bread in the garbage, he returns it to his father, but it is already too late. He has

died." (These excerpts are from the World Vision, International Report of conditions in Bangladesh). These are pitiful situations but they are not rare. People are dying by the thousands. People are even too weak to flight off the mildest case of measles or a common cold. The result is death.

Is the final answer for the United States to take the whole burden on its back and try to feed the world??? Do we forget the U.S. consumer who screams because food prices have gone sky high and would go even higher if we try to feed the world?? Do we do as Dr. Handler suggests and just play God and forget some people and leave them to die?? Is it just possible that it would make more sense to teach these people how to produce their food so that they can maintain themselves?? After all an old Chinese proverb says, "Give a man a fish and he can have food for a

day. Teach a man how to fish and he can have food for a life." Can we use the tremendous technology that we have developed in other countries to help lift them out of the throes of starvation and death?? It is necessary to take care of the problem now so that people don't starve to death, but it is also essential to look to find an answer for the future also.

There are many problems encountered when people try to solve a major problem. The answers are not found easily. But we must definitely do something. The U.S. has indeed done a great deal and will continue to do more even if she gets a slap in the face instead of one on the back. There are many other countries that are capable of helping out in this great battle for humanity. I have by no means found the solution to this world problem. Maybe I have given you some food for

thought. Maybe you'll find yourself giving financially to some worthwhile organization or church to help. Maybe you'll find yourself upset greatly at what happened to the Americans at the World Food Conference and decide that America has done enough for others and its time to quit giving handouts to others. Whatever you feel, you can not remain neutral. Every individual as well as every country must answer that question, "Am I My Brother's Keeper".

Submitted by Clifford Day from Garden Spot High School.

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