



# THE ROYAL BANK OF CANADA MONTHLY LETTER

VOL. 45, No. 6

HEAD OFFICE: MONTREAL, JUNE 1964

## *The Hungry World*

WE ARE ON THE THRESHOLD of the world's most exciting, most fearful, and yet most hopeful period. It will be made exciting by advances in science and technology, and fearful by threat of war and the menace of hunger, but it will be made hopeful by the increasing capability of the minds of men to cope with life.

Of all our problems, none is more urgent than that of hunger. It is commonplace for orators to tell us that men's social skills have not kept up with their mechanical skills. Here is another area, seldom thought of, in which men have not kept up. For ninety-nine per cent of the time man has been on earth he was a food gatherer, and only during the remaining one per cent has he been a food producer. He has not yet learned the new technique effectively.

The present food shortages are a reminder of the slender material foundation on which our civilization and our lives rest. There is an ominously increasing pressure of population on the world's food supply. Hendrik van Loon seemed to make everything very simple in his *Geography*: the whole of the human race could be packed into a box a little over half a mile square. But the space of air displaced by a human body in a box is far removed from the space of earth needed to nourish it in life.

### *How many are hungry?*

It is difficult for North Americans to understand the plight of people in underdeveloped countries, because we have never been desperately hungry. No one dies here of starvation. Elsewhere, more than 1,500 million people go to bed hungry every night. A statistical study by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) confirms that at least a third to a half of the world's people suffer from hunger or malnutrition.

Being forced to live on anything below adequate food makes a man a social liability. He cannot work effectively on an empty stomach; he cannot study and learn as he must in order to improve his condition; he cannot think beyond the dominant immediate need, which is his next meal; he cannot build up resistance

to wasting disease; he holds back not only the economic and social development of his own country but also the prosperity of the world.

The FAO estimates that only about one sixth of the world's population is well fed.

In order to understand the condition of people in the underdeveloped countries we need to compare the figures of consumption of live-stock products. It is only from meat, fowl, fish, eggs, milk and cheese that we obtain the proteins necessary to body growth and health. The diet of people in North America includes 25 per cent of live-stock products; the people in Europe have 17 per cent; but only 3 per cent of Asia's diet is in this form.

Canada's Food Guide, approved in 1961 by the Canadian Council on Nutrition, prescribes one serving of meat, fish or poultry every day, with eggs, cheese, dried beans or peas as alternatives. Compare this with the typical diet of a rice-eating working man in India. A city dweller in Canada consumes 4.66 pounds of food a day; the Indian consumes 1.23 pounds a day, 85 per cent of it rice which is deficient in protein, fats and vitamins.

Canada's Food Guide specifies that children up to eleven should have 2½ cups of milk a day, adolescents four cups, adults 1½ cups, and expectant and nursing mothers four cups. In Calcutta there are six million people who get no milk at all. Most of the world's children have to pass straight from breast-feeding to a diet composed largely of starchy foods. India has 20 per cent of the world's dairy cattle, but they produce only a sixth to a tenth of the average milk yield in other countries.

The fact is that not more than one in a hundred of the people in underdeveloped countries will ever, in all his life, have what a North American family would consider a good, square meal. This forms the sombre background against which to view world events.

### *Standard of living*

The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights,

adopted in 1948, says: "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family."

To have a good standard of living does not mean becoming encumbered with western world impedimenta. It does mean not having to eat grass, as women have been seen to do near the Persian Gulf; it does mean that the emaciated labourer in China does not have to go for a day on scraps of food that contain only 200 calories while his Canadian counterpart has a regular 2,500-calorie intake.

Owen D. Young said at the University of California: "Let no man think that the living standards of America can be permanently maintained at a measurably higher level than those of the other civilized countries. Either we shall lift theirs to ours or they will drag ours down to theirs."

Relatively high standards of living prevail in about twenty countries with a combined population of around 450 million out of an estimated world total of 3,230 million. The significance of these figures can hardly be grasped at first encounter. They are the most important statistics ever set down on paper. It took man a thousand millenniums to roll up a total of 900 million, and in the last century and a half he has added 2,330 million.

So rapid is the growth that a world population of more than 6,000 million is estimated by the Population Division of the United Nations by the year 2,000 — only thirty-six years from now. Of these, 3,639 million will be in the Far East, 947 million in Europe, including the U.S.S.R., 592 million in Latin America, 327 million in the Near East, 421 million in Africa, 29 million in Oceania, and 312 million in North America.

In the twenty minutes it takes to read this *Letter*, nearly 2,000 additional mouths have added their demanding plea for food. This figure is based on the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook*, which estimates the present rate at 100 million births and 51 million deaths in a year.

What, then, is to be done? Dr. P. V. Sukhatme, Director of the Statistics Division of FAO, said in 1962: "The broad conclusion to be drawn is that, should the population grow according to the United Nations forecast, the world's total food supplies would have to be doubled by 1980 and trebled by the turn of the century."

The only alternative put forward by those who have studied the grave situation is control of population. The high birth-rate which nature bestowed on the human species to ensure its survival is today the burden which keeps so much of the world on the borderline of starvation.

With the approval of the whole of society man applies his most intelligent efforts to reducing the death-rate. On the other hand, the reduction of the birth-rate faces the opposition of customs, doctrines, laws and community rites which are all focused on

maintaining high fertility. Man has lifted his species from the natural controls which limit all other species, but, says a report issued by the Rockefeller Foundation: "Declining mortality and stable fertility cannot coexist permanently within a finite universe, whatever the level to which technology may advance."

It is easy to say that population increase should be ordered by reason, but we have to remind ourselves again and again of the humanness of human beings. In some societies family planning is not acceptable; in others, where childless old age can mean starvation, children are the only form of "social security"; boys are a standard of value in a world which has no other material wealth; girls are not only a source of domestic labour but often bring rich dowries.

### *Underdeveloped countries*

There are millions of people in underdeveloped countries whose only aim is to keep alive, staving off death today for another dead tomorrow, wringing subsistence from their environment with bare hands.

This skeletal population has not yet been touched by the science and technology which have given the industrial West its ease of living. Here are, as the *Manchester Guardian* pictures them, "the children whose eyes stare as if blind, whose legs and arms are like sticks of liquorice, who neither cry nor laugh, and who weigh ten pounds at the age of two years."

The West believes that in its own interest it must do something to cope with this awesome problem of poverty and hunger. If other freedoms are to be cultivated, it is first necessary to create freedom from want. All the infectious ideologies take hunger as a weapon.

The paths of escape from these conditions are long and steep, and some that were taken by the Western nations during recent centuries are no longer open.

How are we going to bring food and hunger into balance? In addition to stating statistically that such and such a quantity of food is necessary for the people of so-and-so country, we need to pursue the matter to the point of indicating where they are to get it.

This problem is capable of solution, says the Food and Agriculture Organization. We might turn jungles into farm lands, carry irrigation to certain deserts which have fertile soil, push farm areas up into the Arctic regions, and, cheaper and quicker than any of these, make better use of present farm lands. World consumption of fish could be doubled without depleting resources. Science can help by the synthesis of foods, by making practicable the culture of lower plant forms like yeast, and by pushing food production into the earth's 141 million square miles of water.

One thing is certain: the import of food from the wealthier to the less wealthy regions can never provide more than a small part of what is needed. We cannot feed the underdeveloped countries by scraping our bins, borrowing on next year's crops, shipping dried

eggs, lard or milk. Pearson and Paarlberg point out in their book *Starvation Truths, Half-Truths, Untruths*: if all feeding of wheat to live-stock in Canada and the United States were prohibited, and the consumption of wheat by human beings reduced by 25 per cent; if the acreage of corn and oats were reduced by 25 per cent and planted to wheat; we could produce about 1,000 million additional bushels of grain for human consumption. On the Chinese standard, this would feed about 80 million people for a year. As has been estimated by the United Nations, more than 1,500 million people have to be fed.

### *Upgrade the farms*

The best answer to the world's agricultural problem is the development of food production where it is needed.

Pitifully little is produced in the underdeveloped world by lifelong backbreaking labour. In many countries the implements available to farmers have not changed in thousands of years. Merely to substitute stronger or better-designed hand tools or to provide animal-drawn implements would make a big difference in farm yields.

If the people of a Canadian town were to raise \$5,000 it could finance the introduction of improved varieties of rice, and pay for research into ways of increasing the crop; if another town raised \$50,000 it might go toward importing and training buffaloes as draught animals, enlarging the area of wet paddy cultivation by fifty per cent.

A massive contribution can be made through the provision of fertilizers for land and sprays against pests, the introduction of high-yield and disease-resistant varieties of corn, oats, soy beans, potatoes and other crops. Fertilizers alone, it is estimated by FAO could bring about an increase in crop yields of thirty per cent. By merely adding an outboard motor to a boat at one experimental station, enabling the fishermen to reach a better area, the catch of fish was increased from 13.3 pounds of fish a day to 139 pounds a day.

Besides all this, industrialization is needed. No country has made substantial economic progress until about half of the working population has been shifted from agriculture to industry. This development is necessary to provide construction, transportation, communication, housing, clothing, and a more efficient agriculture.

The essentials of production are land, labour, capital and organization, but people in the underdeveloped countries must first be educated to use these and inspired to want what they will provide. Expenditures for education constitute one of the most effective forms of development assistance. That is why Canada has encouraged recipient countries to take advantage of scholarships to prepare teachers, and has through capital assistance supported the development of edu-

cational institutions in the countries being helped.

The extent of the problem is indicated by an estimate made by UNESCO that in the world today only about one person in eight of all ages and about two in five between the ages of five and twenty receive some formal education. Only about forty per cent of the estimated world population between the ages of five and nineteen inclusive are enrolled in educational institutions. About 750 million persons at or over school age cannot read or write.

This low level of literacy is a greater handicap today than was illiteracy during the industrialization of nineteenth-century Europe. Britain could take a generation to learn what must be absorbed in the present emergency in a year.

To meet the situation, UNESCO has launched an effort to get all children into school by 1980, and this entails training 9½ million teachers. UNESCO also wants to get ten per cent of children into secondary schools, and to make 500 million adults literate in the sense of participating in community development.

### *Why action is needed*

So basically influenced are human beings by the need for food that peace and war, international understanding, and the whole fabric of human social life are profoundly affected by it. Prince Philip said in an address to Canadian engineers and scientists in Toronto: "It is recognized that an explosive situation will inevitably develop if the gap between the 'have' nations and the 'have-not' nations grows too big."

The statistics of misery is not, then, a remote economic and technical affair, but one bound up intimately with social policy. Statesmen who are realists will give a high place in their thinking to the elimination of hunger and squalor in all parts of the world as a means to protecting and enhancing the lives of people in their own countries.

Aldous Huxley said in a paper for the Fund for the Republic in 1963: "By shifting our attention from the now completely irrelevant and anachronistic politics of nationalism and military power to the problems of the human species . . . we shall be . . . reducing the threat of sudden destruction by scientific war and at the same time reducing the threat of more gradual biological disaster."

From disappointment, through resentful frustration, to widespread social unrest the road is short. Shorter still is the road from social unrest, through chaos, to dictatorship, possibly of the Communist party, more probably of generals and colonels.

The restlessness in Asia, the Middle East and Africa means among other things an increasing consciousness of the disparity between their people's present living standards and the standards common in more affluent countries. Of democracy they know little, but of hunger they know much.

Since the end of the second world war more than 800 million people in various parts of the world have seized independence, hopefully seeking to become masters of their own destiny in order to escape from poverty. Almost all of them are abysmally poor, with weak capacity for self-sustained economic growth.

### *International co-operation*

The problem can no longer be left to be dealt with by each nation according to its capability, but must be tackled through international co-operation.

The world conscience has found inspiring expression in the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Constitution of the Food and Agriculture Organization. To implement the ideals expressed in these documents, the United Nations is endeavouring to concentrate effort during the 1960's.

The FAO came into existence at a meeting in Quebec in 1945 to help the peoples of the world in their continuing and increasing fight against hunger and malnutrition. Its activity includes sending technicians into underdeveloped countries to help them to build up their agricultural, economic, fishery, forestry and nutrition services. It has organized a World Food Programme, in which Canada is participating, with the purpose of establishing a \$100 million pool of food and money.

In 1959 the member nations of FAO launched the Freedom from Hunger Campaign, aiming at the progressive and lasting removal of hunger from the human scene. The basis of the Campaign is self-help, with less developed regions using the means provided by the Campaign to make better use of their own human and material resources. In 1961 the representatives of thirty-three national organizations in Canada met in Toronto to form the Canadian Committee; today there are fifty organizations participating.

Another effort, serving a particular area, is the Colombo Plan for Co-operative Economic Development in South and Southeast Asia. This was conceived at the Commonwealth Meeting of Foreign Ministers in Ceylon in 1950. Canada has participated actively, giving capital and financial assistance for development projects. In addition, her contribution in flour and wheat up to February 1964 amounted to \$115,370,917. Of this, \$62½ million went to India and \$35½ million to Pakistan. The balance was divided between Burma, Cambodia, Ceylon, Indonesia, Nepal and Viet Nam.

Dr. H. L. Trueman, Secretary of the Canadian Freedom from Hunger Committee, explains: "The food is sold in the recipient countries for local currency and the proceeds used by local governments for development projects approved by the donor countries." These projects include irrigation systems, harbour installations, rural roads to enable farmers to get their produce out to market, and technical and co-operative schools.

Another Canadian activity within the Freedom from Hunger Campaign is the Mysore project to establish a training centre where men and women from Far Eastern countries will be taught processing, packaging and storage methods by which essential foods can be preserved and distributed to hungry families.

### *No escape*

Some people with their heads above the clouds may be looking toward relief from pressing food and population problems when travel to other planets becomes practicable. Often in the earth's history the opening up of new continents has afforded just that sort of relief.

The Chairman of the British Interplanetary Society, Arthur C. Clarke, takes a more realistic view. It would be far easier, he says, to make the Antarctic bloom like the rose than to establish large, self-supporting colonies on such worlds as Mars.

Just suppose a space ship taking off from the earth every sixty minutes day and night, carrying 100 emigrants to whatever planet you choose. Those flights would take 876,000 people in a year—a mere 1.7 per cent of the current addition to earth's population.

This may appear to be harping on one string, but there is no more important note in the future of mankind. It is time to give a thought to the prospects of our grandchildren who will be living several decades from now.

Hunger is a fundamental issue of our time, and the treatment we give it in the next few years will affect the survival of our species and the well-being of individuals.

Dr. Trueman warns that we must not allow our attention to what is going on in the major part of the world, affecting two-thirds of the world's population, to be distracted by the banging of fists on conference tables, the blast of rockets from launching pads, and the building of walls dividing nations. "What I hear," he says, "is the babble of millions of children's voices in schools where no schools previously existed; the lapping of water in new irrigation channels; the sound of millions of better ploughs moving through the good earth, and the lowing of healthier cattle on a thousand hills."

The common man throughout the world is not seeking Utopia, but a little alleviation of his lot today and that better tomorrow about which Dr. Trueman speaks. Hundreds of millions whose forebears patiently accepted lives of misery are involved in what has been called "the revolution of rising expectations." What has been, up until the past quarter century, a distant dream has now become a passionate demand.

Historian Arnold Toynbee has expressed the hope that this age will be remembered because it is the first generation in history in which mankind dared to believe it practical to make the benefits of civilization available to the whole human race.