

WORLD FOOD DAY

DID YOU KNOW?

- 500,000,000 people suffer chronic hunger and malnutrition; many of these are children.
- Effects of malnutrition; inadequate brain development, blindness, physical deformities.
- North Americans eat 5 times as much as the average Indian or African.
- The world produces 2 pounds of grain per day, an average of 3,000 calories per day per person.
- The 4 Asian countries that feed their people best — China, Vietnam, South Korea and Taiwan — have the least land per head in all Asia.
- Over 100 countries are in "food deficit" — their people consume more food than they produce.
- 5-7 million hectares of agricultural land are lost to soil deterioration each year.



October 16, is the first day of its kind, but will become an annual event. Chosen because of the anniversary of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, people around the world will have an opportunity to re-examine the global food picture.

WHY IS THERE HUNGER IN THE WORLD?

There are no hungry countries. There are countries where many people are hungry — they cannot grow, or afford to buy, enough to feed themselves or their families. In that sense, many Canadians are hungry. But in poor countries, half or more of the people may be in grave danger at any one time, and many of them live in the countryside.

Westerners may think this is because of over-population, drought, or laziness on the part of the people themselves. But these explanations are all myths. Holland, for example, is one of the most densely-populated countries in the world. Population does not cause hunger, although it can aggravate the situation.

The problem lies in the structure of landholding. The peasant who gives tender loving care to the little land they possess are the most efficient farmers in the world. However, about 100 million rural residents in the Third World own no land, and relatively few landholders have enough even to feed themselves through the year.

The vast majority of land in these nations is owned and controlled by very small groups of people, and the wealth that is produced from the crops on that land goes to the owners alone. The peasants who work in the huge estates

receive very low wages, and may spend a large part of the year starving.

To say that land reform is needed in the developing nations is an understatement.

The second reason for hunger is the cash crop system. When you have a piece of land, you can decide to farm it two ways. One is to grow almost everything you need and live off the products. The other is to grow one or two main crops and sell them for cash, which you would use to buy other kinds of food. This system was imposed on many Third World countries in colonized times. Some countries have one major crop that is not a food item, because of this the countries cannot produce all the food they need. There is an apparent need to achieve self-sufficiency in food before producing cash crops of another nature.

There are two reasons why many countries have problems with starvation and malnutrition. It has nothing to do with the size of the population or the amount of initiative the people have. It has everything to do with political, economic or historical circumstances that the starving millions did not create.