

# Hunger and Politics



World Bank photo by Larry Daughton

ALEX MOLNAR

United States citizens and charitable organizations have given, and given generously, at home and abroad for years. Yet hunger is still a fact of human existence.

Why?

Many teachers in the U.S. face two difficulties in exploring that question. They must establish the fact of the existence of hunger, and they must help their students analyze the reasons it continues to exist.

I know of no reputable source that disputes the existence of widespread hunger in the world. It is hard to be in favor of hunger. Therefore, teaching that hunger exists is not likely to cause much controversy, except perhaps as it takes away from the long a sound or the multiplication table. In school, hunger often enters the curriculum informally

through activities such as food drives to help the needy. For many children, doing something about hunger means dropping a generic can of peas into a collection box at the local McDonalds.

Can anything more be done than increasing the number of cans? The answers to that question are likely to be controversial. As Ellen Goodman writes:

Americans learn to live in a culture of haves and have-nots. We co-exist with some inequality and teach our children the survival techniques of dulled sensibility. We walk around certain people, drive around "bad" neighborhoods and comfort ourselves with

the notion the government is helping. . . . We see again all the contrasts, all the gaps, as if we were visitors in Calcutta.<sup>1</sup>

Formulating curricular materials that help students consider that the reasons for hunger in the U.S. and the reasons for hunger in the rest of the world may be the same, and that those reasons are political, encourages a hard look at sharp divisions, touches on the political relationships behind those divisions, and raises questions about U.S. policy at home and abroad.

In my neighborhood there isn't much of a debate about hunger at the moment, though some people are concerned about our involvement in El Salvador—which raises another political question. Do we, as educators, have a responsibility to help children consider whether the same power relationships

*Alex Molnar is Associate Professor, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*

that help produce widespread hunger also often produce armed conflict, as Susan George indicates in her article?

Dalgaard and Schug point out that there are concrete ways to bring international concerns home and to examine the relationship between "back here" and "over there." But do we want to? The answer can only emerge out of civic and professional debate.

### For Your Information

I suggest that educators who are interested in knowing more about hunger and related problems should contact:

- Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1885 Mission St., San Francisco, CA 94703. Phone: (415) 864-8555.
- Center for Science in the Public Interest, 1755 S. St., N.W., Washington, DC 20009.
- Science for the People, 897 Main St., Cambridge, MA 02139.

Bruce Dalgaard and Mark Schug offer the following list of organizations that are knowledgeable about global education and world hunger:

- Center for Teaching International Relations, University of Denver, Denver, CO 80208. Produces a wide range of global education materials written and tested by classroom teachers. Many topics deal with hunger related issues, including *Teaching About Food and Hunger* by G. G. Otero, Jr., and G. R. Smith, 1978.
- Foreign Policy Association, 205 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10016. Publishes diverse materials on issues related to world hunger and many other global concerns. *Great Decisions* and the *Headline* series are regular publications useful to teachers and high school students.
- Global Perspectives in Education, 218 E. 18th St., New York, NY 10003. Produces numerous materials on global related issues, including *Food for All: Teaching Against Hunger*, which is number 102 in the *Intercom* series, September 1982.
- National Council for the Social Studies, 3501 Newark St., N.W., Washington, DC 20016. Provides serv-

ices to teachers interested in global affairs, including a recent bulletin, *International Human Rights, Society, and the Schools*, 1982.

Susan George recommends the following resource materials:

- *World Hunger: A Guide to the Economic and Political Dimensions*, by Nicole Ball (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO Press, 1981). A critical biography of over 3,000 entries.
- *Needless Hunger: Voices from a Bangladesh Village*, by Betsy Hartman and James Boyce, and *Food First*, by Frances Moore Lappe and Joseph Collins (Houghton Mifflin, 1977), both available from the Institute for Food and Development Policy (see address above).
- *Bread and Justice*, by James B. McGinnis (New York: Paulist Press, 1979). Examines Third World trade problems, the new international economic order, and other questions relating to hunger.
- *Seeds of Plenty, Seeds of Want*, by Andrew Pearse (Oxford University Press, 1980). Details of dispossession of peasants in Third World settings. Summarizes the conclusions of a multi-year study carried out by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development on the so-called "Green Revolution."
- Worldwatch Institute, 1776 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. Publishes pamphlet-size documents on Third World issues. Their research is painstaking and figures are reliable.
- *Seeds of Famine*, by Richard Franke and Barbara Chasin (Montclair, N.J.: Allanheld, Osmun, 1980). An "area study" demonstrating that the Sahel famine was far from being a result of climate or drought. Detailed but highly readable.

• Other studies by Susan George: *How the Other Half Dies: The Real Reasons for World Hunger* (Montclair, N.J.: Allanheld, Osmun, 1977); *Feeding the Few: Corporate Control of Food* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Policy Studies, 1979); *Food for Beginners* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1982); and *Winnowings*, a collection of essays (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Policy Studies, 1982). □

1Ellen Goodman, "U.S. Have-Nots Become More Visible," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, Friday, January 14, 1983, p. 14.

## the floppy copy you've been looking for

Across the nation, Data Command microcomputer programs are winning the applause of teachers and students alike! They zero in on crucial reading and math skills, constantly challenging pupils toward mastery with color, excitement, success!

Data Command programs feature:

- Innovative activities with animated graphics
- Carefully controlled vocabulary levels
- Instant summarization of pupil results
- Concise teacher support materials
- Fast, efficient implementation

Some typical comments:

"Your programs are some of the best I've seen."

Carolyn Rutledge, Reading Director, Eagle Elem. School, Van Horn, TX

"You hooked us on both" (of the reading programs we previewed.)

Judy Henry, LLC Director, Rhodes Elem. School, River Grove, IL

programs  
are now available  
for  
**COMMODORE TAS-80  
APPLE**

To find out more about the reading "Floppy Copy" you've been looking for, mail the coupon to Data Command, P.O. Box 548, Kankakee, IL 60901

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
School \_\_\_\_\_  
School Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ EdL



Copyright © 1983 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.