

FROM LAND TO MOUTH

By Herbert Meyer

Recent events in the Horn of Africa, Bangladesh, Sudan, Ethiopia, Iraq, Eritrea and Somalia have raised the spectre once again of famine and starvation throughout the so-called 'Third World'.

Almost like clockwork, apologists arise saying that of course the main problem with the 'Third World' is one of massive over-population, resulting in poverty, distress, famine, starvation and death and destruction.

It is important that such neo-Malthusian balderdash is scotched at once. The fact of the matter is that the main problem in all Third World countries, as indeed throughout the world, both developed and undeveloped, is not "over-population" but landlessness.

To take one simple fact: the cadastral surveys of Bangladesh most recently carried out in 1974 for World Watch Limited indicated that there were then 11 million households in Bangladesh. 75% of these were then landless. At that time 11% of the entire population of Bangladesh owned over 50% of all the land. I do not know what the most recent indications are as to the relative number of households or relative proportion of landlessness, but I would be surprised if in fact the proportion of landless has not vastly increased, or else why would millions risk their lives squatting on tidal delta lands?

In Africa only 22% of the **arable** land available for crops throughout the Continent is ever under any form of native cultivation for indigenous food supplies. Instead the arable land is devoted almost entirely to cash crops for exportation to the 'developed' portion of the globe. This exportation of cash crops, including coffee, cocoa, carnations and avocados, is necessary to pay for the massive debts thrust on the so-called 'Third World' by the International Bankers Cartel. Interest payments by the poor to the rich in 1989 amounted to circa £25 billion **more** than all 'aid' given by us to them.

It is incredible, with all the demands made on us by the charities cabal, that no-one appears to speak out demanding that the root cause of these continual disasters be treated seriously and a radical solution found for these avoidable catastrophes.

The reason that no-one demands the inspection of root causes is that to treat

the root cause of famine and starvation is to prove that all famines and disasters are caused by poverty. No-one wants to admit that poverty is the source of the wealth of the rich.

As an aid to indicating that this is not merely my favourite hobby-horse, let me crave in witness a recent book produced on the land question. The book, by Sir Richard Body, Conservative M.P. for Boston-with-Holland, entitled "Our Food, Our Land" is a devastating exposé of the disaster caused the world by the abandonment of the cheap food policy of the United Kingdom in return for joining the Common Agricultural Policy of the so-called Common Market.

Sir Richard graphically points out that the entire cause of the poverty of Africa, Asia and Latin America is in fact the Common Market and the exclusion of all world cheap food from the United Kingdom and the European mainland. Until you tear off the CAP you condemn your fellow human beings to famine, starvation and death. Sir Richard graphically points out that the "protection" of the Common Agricultural Policy for the United Kingdom farmer has in fact not protected the majority of British farmers whatever. When the United Kingdom joined the Common Market in 1973 there were, in round figures, 500,000 United Kingdom farmers. Today there are, again in round figures, 200,000 and in Sir Richard's words "it looks as if the policy has been of little help to at least half of them".

He also gives the reason why 'protection' results in unemployment and destitution:

"the reason is found in the law of economics, it is this: if the State artificially raises the price of the product, the initial benefit to the producer in the form of higher income is nullified by a rise in the value of the asset out of which the product comes. The asset we are concerned with is our land; out of it comes our food; so the price of land rises when the price of food is increased by State action and it rises in aggregate terms as much as the aggregate increase in the price of food. This is what happened with the Corn Laws in the first half of the 19th century, hence the distress and starvation in the countryside, which only became worse when the levies on imported corn were raised still higher." (abridged)