

World Hunger

Remarks by Congressman Les AuCoin
in the House of Representatives
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• Mr. AuCOIN. Mr. Speaker, every day 700 million people go home hungry. For them, a welcome dinner might be a handful of ground cereal or a bit of root scavenged from the parched soil. These are the starving who live in the haunting reality of world hunger.

Like a wartime enemy, world hunger claims lives, devastates land, and halts social progress. Nearly 20 million children under the age of five will die this year because of malnutrition. In parts of South Asia, more than 50 per cent of the children never reach adulthood because they've never had enough to eat.

How is it in our prosperous world, we lose millions of our fellow men and women each year to the clutches of starvation?

One reason is the absence of a U.S. food policy.

We may not have all the answers to world hunger, but we're making strides where we never took steps before.

I was encouraged that the seven major industrialized nations concluded the recent Tokyo energy summit meeting with a statement on agricultural aid to Third World nations.

"We will place more emphasis on cooperation with developing countries in overcoming hunger and malnutrition," the seven attending heads of state declared.

These governments promise a three-prong initiative to combat world hunger:

- To develop effective food policies;
- To increase Third World countries' storage capacities;
- To encourage more worldwide cooperation for agricultural research.

That's an ambitious program. But it's the promise for Third World agricultural development we must keep. Achieving development goals among the many countries of the world is difficult. We must overcome cultural barriers besides identifying solutions to world hunger.

Yet the United States is no stranger to successful foreign aid. Ever since the Marshall Plan we have pursued a strong tradition of humanitarian aid in developmental assistance. Now is the time to put that tradition into practice as we pledge to end world hunger.

First, look at grain reserves. The President said in Tokyo that the United States would assist in building up the Third World food storage capacities. To do so, we must provide a

reliable stockpile when it comes time to fill those bins.

If we hope to foster technical development, it can't be on a starvation diet. Technical and nutritive assistance go together. A starving worker cannot run a machine. Food security means assuring reserves in emergency situations. We can give people of the Third World that assurance by guaranteeing our share of a world food reserve, and that's the opportunity Congress faces right now.

The Congress will consider the final version of the International Development Cooperation Act soon. In that bill are provisions for a food reserve system. Three hundred thousand metric tons will be earmarked for emergency food reserves. This is a substantial commitment. I urge support of that emergency reserve.

Second, this legislation fosters a new concept in foreign aid: linking guaranteed aid to development incentives. The International Development Cooperation Act, H.R. 3324, requires local workers and institutions of Third World countries to participate in technical programs and planning. This Act could be the ground-breaker for truly effective assistance -- assistance that stimulates self-reliance through participation.

We'll never end world hunger if we don't work to change the structural problems that shackle developing countries. I intend to work for that long-term goal when H.R. 3324 comes before Congress. Direct participation in technical programs will give people a livelihood and therefore an escape from poverty -- which is the real root of hunger.

Other creative solutions are emerging from the Executive Branch as well. The President's Commission on World Hunger, founded last October, has identified several crucial objectives for food security.

During the Commission's July 6 meeting, Eduoard Saouma, Director-General of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, emphasized, "A solution cannot be found to the problems of poverty and hunger without fuller use of the multilateral institutions." He further stated that Third World countries have barely produced as much in agricultural products over the past ten years as during the previous ten years.

Information and concerns such as these help build effective policy. The President's Commission on World Hunger is there to provide that expertise to Congress. We should heed that resource and use it as we legislate.

I urge that we aim to wipe out world hunger by 1990. That's not impossible with the right programs and the right vision.

We must act immediately. Stalling to protect U.S. jobs and prices will only postpone the stand we must take, because we can no longer ignore our part in assuring mankind's most basic right: The right to food.