

TESTIMONY  
Congressman Les AuCoin  
Agriculture Committee  
H.R. 10957

Mr. Chairman:

My purpose in offering testimony today is to urge expeditious consideration of H.R. 10957 and identical bills to establish an International Emergency Food Reserve.

The bill would authorize the President to enter into negotiations with other nations to develop a coordinated world-wide system of food reserves. Until such time as an agreement is reached, the bill would require the creation of a two to four million ton food reserve to provide relief to countries struck by major disasters or where there has been a significant shortfall in food production.

Mr. Chairman, in urging action on this legislation I am reminded of an article which TIME Magazine carried last fall. It concerned American's bumper harvest that season. There, in full color, we saw surplus grain dumped -- literally -- onto the main street of Marshall, Oklahoma because the bins were already filled to capacity.

The same issue of the magazine told yet another story. A story of drought in the Sahara and starvation in Bangladesh. Punctuating the grey statistics were pictures -- pictures of children with hollow eyes and swollen bellies, pleading in their silent way for someone to help them.

The contrast of those two stories is vivid testimony to the bounty of this country at a time when half a billion people around the world are without the minimum nourishment they need to sustain productive life.

It's also a reminder that we can help overcome this appalling situation if we only commit ourselves to the task. We know the problem. We have the technical capacity to address the problem. We have the resources to address the problem.

What we do not have -- yet -- is the political will to conquer hunger of the kind that it took to put a man on the moon in the 60's and undertake the search for new energy sources today.

The legislation which is before you today is a step in this direction. A modest step, perhaps, but a step nonetheless. And it is a step which we must take.

I urge your early consideration of this important legislation.