

(A presentation made by Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., president of the University of Notre Dame, at a National Conference of Catholic Bishops Bicentennial Committee meeting, Catholic University of America, February 4, 1975.)

FOOD IN AN INTERDEPENDENT WORLD

Two hundred years after the Declaration of Independence, America and the rest of the world need a Declaration of Interdependence.

One of the perennial needs of mankind -- no less evident today than in 1776 -- is to find a workable rationale for continuity in times of change, and today the workable rationale for conceptualizing continuity in change is bound up in the notion of interdependence. It is a notion relatively new in our world lexicon, but suddenly it has appeared in almost every recent article or book one reads on world politics or economics. Interdependence is involved in every current discussion of world development, trade, or monetary policy. No one even attempts to analyze or prescribe for the present world problems of food or fuel or environment without focusing on the concept of interdependence. It haunts the current detente between the great powers, the search for lasting peace in the Middle East. Even the poets allude to it: "No man is an island" -- the inspiring theme of John Donne.

Interdependence is a thought and a theme that runs counter to many of our shibboleths of the past: nationalism, ethnocentrism, rugged individualism, empire, cold war, East and West with never the twain meeting. How did interdependence so suddenly emerge as an idea whose time has come? Partially, I believe, it came as a response to new and unprecedented challenges that have burst upon the world scene in recent years. More fundamentally, it represents a kind of modern Copernican revolution that involves a new way of looking at our world. I have been impressed by the fact that this new look is a fallout of the Space Age, whose most important result was not close-up pictures of the moon, but a new look at the world from afar. There it

whirls in the black void of space, blue and brown, flecked with white clouds, in the words of Lady Jackson, Barbara Ward, our "Spaceship Earth".

In the past, our vision of the earth was dominated, even in the age of exploration, as a world of immense distances, of infinite resources, "the treasures of the Indies and of Cathay", of widely different varieties of mankind, flora and fauna, in a word, a world of immensity and variety and difference.

Now, when asked what impressed him most in viewing the earth from the moon, one astronaut said: "I could put up my thumb and blot out the whole earth". Viewed as a small spacecraft, the passengers as crew, it is not a large step to understand their interdependence in all they do, living together interdependently on a planet with limited resources and growing needs. In fact, there are few serious human problems today whose impact and significance are not global, requiring, therefore, a global solution as well. I offer a small list: war and peace, human development, population, food, energy, unemployment, trade and commerce, communications, crime, arms control, drugs, environment, literacy, the use of the seas, the resources of the seabed, atomic technology, monetary systems, agriculture, air and sea transport, health.

In every one of these items, global considerations are needed to describe the full reality, and in each of them, we have a concrete example of the modern interdependence of nations and mankind globally. In the past, each of these problems or opportunities would have been viewed solely in the national or local perspective. Today, any local or national response to any one of these realities would be both inadequate and largely useless.

For example, in the distant past, an Arab-Israeli war over a few miles of barren sand wastes in the Sinai and some rocky hills on the Golan Heights would have been a largely local struggle. In our time, however, it involved billions of dollars of the most sophisticated military equipment, provided to each side by the two mightiest military powers on earth. The tensions it generated risked sparking a global conflict and did, indeed, precipitate an oil embargo which, in turn, threatened the whole

Atlantic Alliance, nearly ruined Japan's economic miracle, dislocated fuel prices to an extent that will involve massive shifts in world capital balances, aggravated the emerging fertilizer and food crises worldwide, possibly will mean massive starvation in the developing world and consequent political and economic chaos among the Third World's billions of peoples. The geography involved was only a few hundred square miles of poor land, but the repercussions were worldwide and of almost cataclysmic proportions. The earth will be reverberating from these crises for years yet to come. All of these concatenated developments both illustrate and are illuminated by the notion of interdependence.

As is the case of other great seminal ideas, this notion of interdependence is useful only if translated into the world of reality, to help understand real problems, to elaborate realistic solutions, to change mentalities and cast world views into a more meaningful perspective for a better world. We do, in fact, have an interdependent world. What is needed is to recognize the fact and shape world policy accordingly.

For this reason, it would be helpful for the purposes of this discussion to translate global interdependence into terms of a specific and urgent modern problem which, like all other such problems, both illustrates the reality of interdependence in a graphic way and provides a frame of reference in which to demonstrate how interdependence at work can bring hope to an otherwise hopeless situation. In turn, this exercise involves a totally new perspective for life on Spaceship Earth, a perspective that is applicable to other global problems.

I would like to focus now on the global food problem, not because it is the most important problem facing mankind -- man does not live by bread alone -- but because it is present, urgent, and itself interdependent upon other global problems, such as human rights, development, population, fuel, pollution, agriculture, trade, monetary balances, and a host of others relating totally to the future of life on this planet.

The food situation on this planet has never been more precarious than at present. Food was, of course, the almost total concern for primitive man, so much so that early man is characterized as a hunter or a gatherer, but never before has the whole matter of sufficient food for survival been cast in such monumental world proportions as at present. Food demand is up 50% since twenty years ago, while world food stocks as of last Summer stood at 27 days of world need, compared to a 95-day world supply available fifteen years ago. Climate has complicated the situation. With some perceptible cooling in the Northern polar latitudes due to the expansion of the circumpolar vortex, there has occurred a series of floods in the United States, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Japan, with unusual drought conditions North and South of the equatorial line from Nicaragua through the Sahelian belt of Sub-Sahara Africa through the Wallo region of Ethiopia and into India's Maharashtra Province and China's Yangtze valley.

This climatic change has had a disastrous effect on food production. In 1973, I visited some of the Sahelian countries in Africa where the Sahara Desert is moving South at about 30 miles a year. In the refugee camps around Nouakshott, Timbuktu, and Gao, one sees hundreds of thousands of Tuaregs who have lost all of their herds and are despondently dependent on a minimal amount of rice, wheat, and corn flown in daily on military air lifts. It is like attempting to feed an elephant with a teaspoon. In those incredibly torrid and sandy spots, one sees the face of hungry desperation and realizes that human suffering transcends the grim statistics. People starve and die, not numbers.

As this is happening in the underdeveloped world, we in the developed world are consuming almost a ton of food grains annually per person while the poorest barely subsist on 400 pounds a year. We only consume 150 pounds of our grain directly as bread and pastry products, the rest going into the production of meat, milk, and eggs. The poor consume all of the grain directly in bread, chapattis, and tortillas. Affluence has doubled meat consumption during the past twenty years in America and

Canada. Since it takes seven pounds of grain to produce one pound of beef, more grains are fed to animals in America than are consumed directly in the poor nations, thus further complicating the food crisis. Now the face of interdependence begins to appear. For example, a quarter of a pound less of beef a week per person in the United States would free over ten million tons of wheat a year for a hungry world, and contribute to American health, too, with the lowering of cholesterol intake.

Only three countries are exporting substantial amounts of grain today, the United States, Canada, and Australia, who together export about 100 million tons. As it is, America's export of food grains to poor nations under Public Law 480, the Food for Peace Program, has dropped from 18 million tons in 1965 to 9 million in 1971-72 to 3.4 million or less today. Two-thirds of the distribution is for politico-military rather than humanitarian motives. In the past, America kept about 60 million acres of farmland in reserve, mainly to stabilize prices. Now it is all in cultivation.

At this point last year, the oil crisis arrived. As a further indication of interdependence, we had an immediate fertilizer crisis. Several developments are worthy of mention. Japan, the supplier of one-third of the fertilizer to South Asia, had to decide during the oil shortage to concentrate on producing autos for export or fertilizer. Autos won. The United States was in the middle of a price control program and quietly, to maintain lower prices at home, in October, 1973, put an embargo on new export contracts for fertilizer. To complete the picture, one must realize that while oil and natural gas convert to nitrogenous fertilizer on a one-to-one basis, a pound of fertilizer used with the new genetic strains of food grains converts to ten pounds of grain in the developing countries.

As a result of these interdependent developments, India, for example, is almost a million tons short of fertilizer this year, which translates into a shortfall of ten million tons of grain. While this is happening, three times more fertilizer than India needs is being used on lawns, golf courses, and, ironically, cemeteries.

In the underdeveloped nations, always short of capital, increased fuel and food prices probably cost an extra \$15 billion last year, just about twice the amount of the total assistance (\$8 billion) they receive annually from all sources.

In the past, interdependence was seen in political terms as the Third World wooed by the Western and Socialist countries with various assistance schemes. Now that detente has arrived among the great powers, that motivation must be replaced by a new sense of interdependence. Some call for self-interest since we are moving into an age of shortage of industrial materials that mostly come from the Third World, oil being only the tip of the shortage iceberg. Now the banana countries, the copper producers, the bauxite group are beginning to follow the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries' example in forming cartels to raise prices, so they can pay for their spiraling costs of fuel and food.

These interdependent developments have given rise to a new category among the 115 countries of the Third World, namely the 35 to 40 countries who have nothing with which to bargain, neither raw materials nor industrial potential, countries such as India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan, the Sahelian countries of Africa, and some Caribbean nations. This is the new, so-called Fourth World, comprising almost a billion people who went without an additional three billion in aid last year.

Norman Borlaug, winner of the Nobel Prize, returned some months ago from India where he saw farmers with containers waiting not hours, but days, for non-existing fuel with which to operate their well pumps. Without this pumped water, their crops died. For us in the developed world, the fuel shortage meant inconvenience. For those in the Fourth World, it means death.

If we viewed the world as truly interdependent, and all men as brothers, we would not allow this to happen. Some will say there is not enough money to help, but this rings false in a world that spends over \$200 billion for armaments each year. Others will say that the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries should

help, and indeed they should, but we must approach the whole problem globally, not piece-meal.

What would interdependence suggest to aid this dire food and fuel disaster for the Fourth World? We might begin by recognizing that the United States, Canada, and Australia are in the same relationship to the devastated Fourth World vis-a-vis food, as the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries are regarding fuel. The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries will have at least a \$50 billion surplus of income over import costs this year and the food grain producing countries will have greatly increased income from the export of higher priced food. The least that either group could do in a truly humane and interdependent world would be to make a concessional grant of food and fuel to these countries of the Fourth World which are put into a life-and-death position by the tripling of prices for food and fuel. A long range solution would, of course, be for the surplus countries to aid these hungry countries in becoming more self-sufficient in their own food production, despite the drought.

As we in this country prepare to observe our 200th birthday, we are witnessing a whole spate of pessimistic and doomsday predictions. The "Club of Rome's" computer study predicts either zero to minus growth or worldwide catastrophe, politically, economically, socially. A much discussed recent study in America, "An Inquiry into the Human Prospect" by Robert L. Heilbroner, asks in the very first paragraph, "Is there hope for man?" and, by and large, the answer throughout the book is "No."

I have not indulged in this discussion of food and interrelated problems to scare the audience, but to underline the proposition with which I began, namely that we must urgently develop a new Weltanschauung, a world perspective based upon the interdependence of all mankind on this relatively small spacecraft with very finite life resources. I am not a prophet of gloom and doom. Neither am I a Micawber who believes that somehow everything will get better and turn out all right. It will get better, I believe, but only if we change profoundly, only if

interdependence passes from an idea to a fruitful and operative reality in the political, economic, and social life of the whole planet.

As one who has worked for more than a decade with the Rockefeller Foundation on the Green Revolution, I can assure you that the world can feed itself if it really decides to do so. Population growth will have to level off because the net addition of 70 million people a year puts an intolerable burden on possible and probable agricultural productivity advances. Actually, every developed country controls its population, so that development and population strategies must go hand-in-hand. But this can be done if mankind determines to do it. Actually, it is much less difficult than putting a man on the moon and we have done that.

We in the West began this century, theologically speaking, with strong Pelagian tendencies. With the scientific and technological revolutions spurring us on, we believed that we could do all things of ourselves, on our own selfish and insensitive terms, whatever the consequences to others. We created, in short order as history runs, a world of incredible global discontinuities and injustices. For example, one could always sense racial prejudices, but today billions of people are automatically and uncontrollably suffering geographic prejudice. If a child is born in the North, he or she faces an ever-lengthening life characterized by increasing health, education, economic and social well-being. If born in most of the Southern parts of our globe, he or she will face a short life, illness, illiteracy, hunger, abominable housing, hopelessness. We in the Northern part of this globe worry about overproducing Ph.D.'s; many children in the Southern Hemisphere never enter a school. We speak of heart and kidney transplants; they never see a doctor from birth to death. Half the children already born in the poorest countries will die before the age of five. We are often overfed and overweight; they are undernourished from birth, often suffering brain damage therefrom. We speak often of second homes; they live in cardboard or mud and wattle huts. We travel anywhere on earth, now supersonically, in hours; they are trapped for a miserable lifetime in urban or

rural slums. We spend more annually on foolish armaments, devilishly devised to destroy life, than they have annually available to maintain life.

And yet, we all are fellow travelers aboard a common spacecraft, ever more intimately interdependent. The decision of an Arab **sheik**, a Japanese industrialist, an American governmental bureaucrat leaves them without irrigation water and fertilizer and, consequently, without food. A decision between the great powers to end the cold war removes the one foolish reason that motivated a substantial part of the aid they received -- so aid starts diminishing drastically just when the need is greatest.

America still did more than closer Europe nations in providing and transporting food to starving Africans, about 600,000 metric tons of food grains at a cost of \$150,000,000. America, of course, has a long tradition of humanitarian aid, having given 85 per cent of all food aid since 1945.

After several generations of foolish Pelagian optimism had created this present cruel world scene, we are now, in the face of worldwide crises -- inflation, shortages, unemployment, pollution, trade imbalances, etc. -- seeing a new swing to pessimism, again theologically a recrudescence of Manichaeism, that sees man as essentially evil and capable mainly of destroying himself and his world.

One is always in danger of oversimplifying when casting world views in definite categories, but I think that whether or not one likes the theological characterizations of Pelagianism and Manichaeism, there is little doubt that pessimism rather than optimism is the order of the day. If I had to characterize my own position, it would be one of Christian and cautious optimism. Theologically, I have good reasons for Christian optimism. It is my reading of the unwillingness of the affluent and powerful of this world to change, to begin to think interdependently, that makes me cautious. It is my hope that if we develop a new world view, really understand our current situation on this troubled planet, we will begin to create a better world as America's 200th birthday and the earth's second millennium approach.

I would hope that we might indeed create new interdependent world-wide socio-economic relations, and new political ones, too. Rather than simply looking at the difficulties and limitations of our capacities for response, I would prefer to look at the new opportunities and creative responses that interdependence would suggest. Human ingenuity in the face of crisis has been one of mankind's greatest glories. I am not blind to the evil and greed in man, but there is, with God's grace -- something almost never mentioned in these studies -- an enormous reserve of good will to be mobilized. However, I also believe that God's grace both proceeds and follows upon some effort of our own to create a new world where justice and equity are the prelude to peace. I pray daily for this grace.

Sometimes a picture is worth a million words. Take the view of the earth from the moon, which reduces the size of our spacecraft. Instead of 3.6 billion people, difficult to imagine, think of a crew of five persons, each representing a segment of humanity. The person representing us and our world, mostly Judeo-Christian, white, Western, affluent, has the use of 80% of the available life resources and amenities aboard our spacecraft. The other four crew members must share the 20% that is left. The situation, though inequitable and unjust, is still deteriorating. Our crew man is increasing his share to 90% at the moment, leaving 2 1/2% for each of the other crew members.

Now I ask you -- given the fundamental interdependence of a spacecraft's crew -- can you imagine much lasting peace or order or good life aboard this spacecraft? The other crew members are not just uneasy and frustrated, they are outraged, as well as hungry and hopeless, since our person also seems to have the only lethal weapon aboard. If our person, we ourselves, does not begin to perceive the utter injustice of the situation, and begin to organize the use of these finite resources in a more just fashion, he will ultimately, inevitably be overwhelmed by some manner of violence. It is no chance affair that one of the most troubled nations of all has just developed an atomic bomb.

My thesis is that we have every theological, philosophical, and humane imperative to change, to respond, and we can find creative ways of doing so. And we must, if we wish peace, as well as survival. What we need is some of the moral vision and inspiring leadership which has informed the history of our own country and which makes us pause at the end of two hundred years to ponder Lincoln's assessment of us as "an almost chosen people."

REV. THEODORE M. HESBURGH, C.S.C.

Father Hesburgh has been president of the University of Notre Dame since 1952. He has served on several public commissions and boards, most notably the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights where he was a member from 1957 to 1972, including three years as chairman. He is currently a member of President Ford's Clemency Board. His interest in the problems of the underdeveloped world grows out of his service some years ago on the President's General Advisory Committee on Foreign Assistance. More recently he has been chairman of the Overseas Development Council, a Washington-based private organization formed in 1969 to promote effective aid to underdeveloped countries. He has traveled widely in Third and Fourth World areas, often on assignments as a trustee of the Rockefeller Foundation. Father Hesburgh is also a member of the board of directors of the Chase Manhattan Bank.

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Speeches*

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humanitarian move. I would like, if I could on the basis of this question, Your Eminence, to mention something else that we are hoping to do here in Washington.

Every time that one goes to a Congressman or a Senator and talks about foreign aid, or food, or peace or disarmament, or almost any one of the subjects that I have been referring to this morning, he says, "Yes, I agree with you but where is the constituency? There are no votes for it; there is no pressure for it."

This has been a long-standing problem which existed also for domestic political problems, such as civil rights and other areas. The moment we built a constituency for civil rights, we got the legislation and the action that we needed to start moving towards progress. But in the case of the interdependent world, there are all kinds of people interested in peace and justice and food and development, etcetera, but it's very hard to get the constituency together.

As you know, the domestic constituency was brought together very quickly and quite effectively by Common Cause under the leadership of John Gardner. And we are thinking very strongly this month of trying to put together a global lobby, if you will, comparable to the domestic lobby of Common Cause, that will work for justice and peace, for the hungry of the world, and for human development in the world. We don't even know what it would be called; something like "Global Lobby" or "World Action," I suppose. But we are, hopefully in this next month or two, going to launch such an effort, so when people say, "What can I do?", we will say, "Send a few dollars to this lobby, and we are going to work for the things that you are most interested in."

CARDINAL DEARDEN: Yes, Dr. Dominguez?

DR. DOMINGUEZ: Yes, I would like to ask you on a subject that you touched briefly upon in your answer, which is food aid to countries such as Chile, or food aid to countries like South Vietnam.

One can argue that indeed there are people there who could use the food in part because of the policies of the governments of those countries that have created the conditions where internal problems of food have worsened. And then it seems to me that one has to make a cruel choice of whether one provides food that may help a government which is of itself part of the problem, or whether one refuses aid and perhaps allows a condition of suffering in that country to continue further. I wonder if you could reflect on that?

FATHER HESBURGH: Well, I'm for feeding hungry people under whatever regime they might live. I mean, you can't argue with hunger, you feed or you let a person die. And I don't think that we can walk by the person even though he may be under a politically repressive regime.

But I think that we can talk consistently about the way that we give this help. If we give it, for example, to a Cambodia, which then puts it in a marketplace and sells it, sometimes at profiteering prices, and uses it to buy more arms to keep a war going, you might want to argue with that system.

On the other hand, if it's given to Catholic Relief Service or World Relief Service, or some groups that altruistically go out and give it to the people who are hungry and don't sell it and don't make profit out of it, but just try to alleviate hunger, that's a different situation. I would personally think that the tradition of our country in the past of letting millions of tons of this aid go through people who can be depended upon to give it to the hungry is better than giving it to governments who use it for

means for which it was not intended -- not for peace, but for war. This is the kind of decision that one would make.

But if you want my opinion, I think you feed the hungry wherever they exist. But you find an effective way of doing it; you don't feed them in a way that will bolster injustice.

CARDINAL DEARDEN: Ms. Acevedo?

MS. ACEVEDO: Yes, I have a question. Very often the Catholic Church's participation in giving food to foreign countries has become a victim of participating in the United States foreign policy. How do you see this problem, especially when we are called paternalistic, and when we help the bandaid problem without solving the real problems?

FATHER HESBURGH: Mr. Butz at the World Food Conference said that food, like anything else, is an arrow in our quiver, or a means of foreign policy implementation. And while that is simply true in view of realpolitik and always has been, I go along the line of Father Hehir, who could say this better than I, that food isn't just like any other commodity. You can certainly use certain commodities the way copper-producing companies use copper, and the way oil-producing companies use oil for political purposes. They all do it.

But copper and oil are not the staff of life in the sense that food is. You can live without copper and oil if you absolutely have to, but you can't live without food. Therefore, food is a completely different kind of commodity, if you will. And you can't play games with people's lives or with their hunger. And I think that one has to have a very altruistic purpose for being concerned about food. You say, "Well, why should we be concerned about it?" First, because we control the market, about 85 percent of it. And secondly, because it's the right thing to do, to feed hungry people.

It's always been interesting to me that when the Lord speaks of judgment, the first thing that He speaks of is "I was hungry and you gave me to eat." It's interesting that in giving Himself to us in the most visible tangible way possible, the Lord does it with food. Food is in a very special kind of category no matter how you look at it, culturally, anthropologically, or economically. And I would hope that in the present crisis we take care of people who otherwise will starve, but I hope that food becomes so important a matter in our agenda that we really do the long-range thing as well, which is provide for these people to become more self-sufficient in food. And that is possible with some imagination and with modern technology. I don't know if I answered your question, Mrs. Acevedo.

MS. ACEVEDO: I'm unclear -- my question, I think, was do you think that it's true that the Catholic Church is participating in helping distribute food does help American policy?

FATHER HESBURGH: No, no. I think they are helping hungry people. But you may want to say something, I don't know. I think they are helping hungry people. I -- you can get political about a lot of things, but food is not a very good instrumentality of politics.

CARDINAL DEARDEN: Thank you, Father Hesburgh.

We would like to pursue this further because this is interesting and instructive, but we are under extremely tight time pressures.

FATHER HESBURGH: I understand that.

CARDINAL DEARDEN: Thank you deeply for what you have presented to us. The next presentation is by Dr. Martin McLaughlin.