

*For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords,
the great God, mighty and awesome,
who is not partial and takes no bribe,
who executes justice for the orphan and the widow,
and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing.
—Deuteronomy 10:17-18*

*This is the first generation in all of recorded history that
can do something about the scourge of poverty.
We have the means to do it.
We can banish hunger from the face of the earth.
—Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey*

4. Making Hunger History: A Trialogue

*George McGovern, Bob Dole, and
Donald Messer*

HUNGER, MALNUTRITION, AND
famine have haunted humanity for centuries. At the dawn of the 21st
century, an estimated 850 million people daily suffer the pain and

consequences of severe food insecurity. However, a growing consensus of political, economic, civic, and religious leaders now envision making hunger history.

In the preceding chapters, the three co-authors have shared their distinct perspectives on ending hunger now. Based on the kind of questions readers typically ask, this chapter serves as a trialogue, as McGovern, Dole, and Messer engage in a conversation on critical questions related to the quest to making hunger history. Topics are indicated by sidebars and each writer is identified with their last name to facilitate understanding as to whose viewpoint is being shared.

Civility and Bi-Partisanship

Messer: Civility in public life, and bi-partisanship in politics, sometimes seems increasingly rare in American life. Yet Senator Dole and Senator McGovern, as recognized national political leaders of the Republican and Democratic parties, respectively, the two of you seem to have discovered the gift of sharply disagreeing with each other on certain issues, but yet working together closely on other questions such as world hunger. How has this happened and why do you consider bi-partisanship so important?

Dole: You know, I think we would both confess that in the early years, when we first came to Congress, we were highly partisan. I now look back at some of the things that I either did or said, and I was fairly partisan. But, of course, I like to think you can grow in the right sense. You do not have to change your philosophy, but you can recognize there are differences in different parts of the country. You might disagree with somebody who supports unions or who supports business. However, we have the same goals, and that is to make America the best spiritually and morally, economically and technologically, and everything else.

Senator McGovern and I served on the Agriculture Committee, along with another great friend of mine, Senator Hubert Humphrey

(Democrat of Minnesota and later Vice President). We did a lot of things together, too. But it occurred to me, that watching Congress and what was happening, that when you had bi-partisanship, the legislation was probably much better. It was going to be more acceptable to more people because it would reflect the views of liberals, conservatives, Democrats, and Republicans.

After I had been in the Senate for a while, I started reaching across the aisle. It was sort of natural for Senator McGovern and myself. We both come from the Midwest. We had a lot of common interests in agriculture and the feeding programs, whether it is food stamps or the WIC [Women, Infants, and Children] program or international food programs. We started working together and we got along very well. We did not always agree on every point and every bill that affected food legislation, but we worked it out. We have had a good relationship—we became friends.

McGovern: Yes, my cooperation with Bob Dole began when we were both United States senators, sitting side by side on the Committee on Agriculture. Previously I had dealt with hunger worldwide as President Kennedy's Food for Peace Director.

I remember one night watching a CBS television report on hunger in the USA. At one point a reporter asked a young boy, maybe 9 or 10 years of age, how it felt to be hungry. With a look like he had kind of stubbed his toe a couple of times, he shocked me when he said, "He was embarrassed." I thought, "This boy should not be embarrassed. Politicians like me should be the ones who are embarrassed. We live in the richest country in the world, and children are hungry." That prompted me to introduce legislation creating a new committee in the Senate, and Bob Dole and I worked in a bi-partisan fashion so no child should suffer hunger in the richest country in the world

Dole: George left the Senate sometime after his run for the Presidency. But I stayed on as became the leader of the Republicans, a post I held for about twelve years. I really understood then, that

strict partisanship is not the way to go. I think I had a reputation for being fair and reaching across party lines and trying to work out party differences. I think the most important legislative accomplishment, in addition to the different food programs, was working with Senator Patrick Moynihan [Democrat, New York] in 1983 to rescue Social Security, which was about to go down the drain. Once again I recognized the importance of bi-partisanship and what it means to those in Congress and what it really means to the beneficiaries, the American people.

Messer: I heard you once quoted as saying that you learned from former Republican Senate Leader, Howard Baker of Tennessee “never to confuse civility with weakness nor generosity of spirit with surrender of principle.”

Dole: Yes, I learned a lot from Howard Baker. We Republicans had not had the majority for a long, long time when he became majority leader. It was a new experience for many of us, to suddenly become committee chairmen and realize we had power to set the agenda, making things happen or not happen. Howard had the right temperament and the right personality. I don't think he had an enemy in the Senate because he kept his word. Of all the things that you do not want to do is to violate your trust. When you give a promise to somebody on the other side, or on your side, then you keep your promise. If you go back on your word in politics, and it's probably true in about everything else, your credibility drops like a rock.

Ending World Hunger

Messer: Working with the two of you in writing this book has certainly been a great honor and pleasure. I agree with Tom Brokaw when he called you leaders of America's “greatest generation.” Both of you not only were decorated heroes of World War II, and prominent political leaders, but also have been committed life-long humanitarians. Some skeptics have suggested you only promoted

food stamps and school lunches because it gained you votes in agricultural states eager to promote their products. Yet other politicians from farm states have not persistently pushed for similar programs, and once you left Congress you kept up the campaign to make hunger history. Why are you so committed to ending world hunger?

Dole: Well, I grew up in a family of very modest means. When I was county attorney in Russell County, Kansas, one of the jobs I had was to sign welfare payments every month to every welfare recipient in the county, three of whom were my grandparents, my grandfather on my mother's side and my grandmother and my grandfather on my father's side. So I knew a little about low income America and how seniors had to struggle to make ends meet and how it is necessary to get certain federal assistance. It was called “Old-Age Assistance” in those days.

I also learned a lot in that office about poor families. I was forced to take children away from their parents, two or three times. So you really learn a lot at an early age and it forms your opinions. I have never believed that everybody wanted to be on welfare, that these people are all lazy and they if they just wanted to work they would not have any problems. Because, before you can accuse anyone of that you first have to offer them a job. If there are not any jobs, you can get up and harangue all day long, but that just does not help anything.

When I was in my second term in Congress, President Lyndon Baines Johnson sent me with several other members of Congress to India because they were having trouble storing their crops. Rats were eating their wheat and a lot of people were starving and hungry, pretty much across the country. We went over there to make a survey and report back to President Johnson. I can never forget how difficult it was to see these young kids with distended bellies and nothing to eat and no hope of anything better. That made a big impression on me, way back in the very early 1960s. So I think my background, my upbringing, and my experiences sort of molded my character to a commitment to ending hunger everywhere.

McGovern: Both Bob and I have seen hunger close-up. We both were in Italy at the same time, a war-torn Italy of World War II, where we saw little children picking up scraps of food on the street. We saw their mothers rummaging through the garbage dumps looking for scraps of food. Sometimes you would see the same young mothers on the street selling themselves at night to American soldiers to pick up a few dollars to feed their families. So I think both of us carry those memories vividly.

Dole and I took that Senate Select Committee on Nutrition and Hunger Needs into some of the most heart-rending scenes of hunger in this country you can imagine. I remember going into a garage within a migrant labor camp in Florida. There we saw twelve children in that garage with an obviously over-stressed young mother with never enough food. She was trying her best to take care of these twelve children. Images like these in our minds drive us to do more.

Messer: I certainly understand the power of those experiences of meeting hungry people. All three of us encountered the tragedy of hunger in India in the early 1960's. For my "junior year abroad" at Dakota Wesleyan University, I studied for a year at Madras Christian College in Madras, India. I recall first meeting you, George, when you came to south India as Food for Peace Director.

People literally were starving in the streets of India. One could not walk to the train station without literally stepping over hungry children and their parents. Leprosy and hunger were twin disasters plaguing the people. Prior to the first shipment of food under the "Food For Peace" program, I had constantly been approached by poor children begging for a few cents in order to buy some food at lunch time. But after the food arrived, I discovered the children quit their begging and were able to return to school.

I also will never forget visiting a hospital in central India where they were using milk powder distributed through Church World Service. They told me they used everything, including the containers in which it was shipped. They ushered me into a room where three premature babies were being kept alive in a makeshift incubator,

constructed of the cardboard cartons in which the Food for Peace shipments had been sent. Up close and personal, I saw that international government food programs saved lives.

Now India is not only self-sustaining in food production, but exports food to other parts of the world. Since the 1960s India's population has more than doubled to over one billion people, so truly the agricultural or green revolution is a modern miracle. Likewise I remember my mother saying, "Don, clean up your plate. People are starving in China." But in the intervening years, China has drastically reduced hunger in their county. Recently in 2005 China accepted its last gift of surplus food from the UN World Food Program because it now has enough capacity for feeding its more than a billion people. Another miracle in our time! Ending hunger is no longer a utopian dream, or even an impossible possibility, but a high probability for humanity.

Strategies for Ending Hunger

Dole: You know, ending hunger in the United States is one thing we should not forget. There are still people in this country who do not have sufficient food and a major cause is lack of educational opportunities. There are a lot of people in this country that maybe speak another language. They do not know how to apply for the programs, although we have tried different outreach efforts to reach people in rural areas and urban areas. I think getting churches involved is a big, big important factor because they reach many, many people. Also we need to get service clubs like Rotary, Kiwanis, and Lions and many other civic organizations involved. They all do great and good things. It is going to take money and it cannot all come from the federal government. It is going to take private initiative as well as money from state governments.

Likewise, when we get into international programs, America cannot do this alone. We are going to have to reach out to other countries, because the African countries where the threat of hunger and AIDS are the greatest, are among those countries who do not have sufficient resources to help their people.

McGovern: The greatest cause of hunger is poverty in our world. Few people with a decent income are hungry. But, unfortunately, some 800 million, maybe as high as 850 million people now, are chronically hungry every day of their lives. They never have a decent meal. And poverty is the central question. That's aggravated, of course, now by this horrible tragedy of AIDS. It has killed hundreds of thousands of farmers. When hundreds of thousands of farmers die of a disease, their food supply is shortened and families go hungry. When you have civil or ethnic conflict, those can be brutal things. War disrupts the production of crops and tears up the countryside. All of this contributes to aggravating the hunger problem.

In the United States we could help end hunger by doing two rather simple things. Number one, raise the minimum wage modestly. Secondly, increase the coverage of the food stamp program. Those two steps would just about wipe out hunger in the United States.

Abroad, we have to move on two fronts. We have to help farmers handle their land, water resources, seeds, and their planting techniques in a more efficient way so that they can provide the major part of their food themselves. On the short term, we have to provide direct food assistance. We need to join with other countries in operating the school lunch program for every schoolchild in the world. We need to have a WIC type program for needy pregnant mothers and their infants for the first five or six years. Things of that kind help get food into the hands of people, who can not wait until agricultural improvements eventually enable countries to feed themselves.

Messer: If we are to end hunger globally, I believe we also need to explore the ideas and plans set forth by the economist Jeffrey Sachs in his new book *The End of Poverty*. He contends we could banish extreme poverty in our generation; yet we permit 8 million people to die each year because they are too poor and sick to survive. Sachs says every day we should read in our newspapers that "More than 20,000 people perished yesterday of extreme poverty." Of course, we do not see such headlines, because impoverished people are nameless and

hungry people are hidden behind the glitter of globalization.

The World Bank projects that 1.1 billion people live in extreme poverty, defined as getting by with an income less than \$1.00 per day. Sachs directs the U.N. Millennium Project, which has a goal of cutting the 1.1 billion by half by 2015. In his brilliant book he has mind-boggling statistics and big plans about how all of this can be achieved. Primarily he advocates five major development interventions: boosting agriculture, improving basic health, investing in education, bringing electrical power, and providing clean water and sanitation. Like the two of you, he offers hope to the world and a strategy for turning rhetoric into reality.

McGovern-Dole Legislation

Messer: Sometimes, however, people's eyes glaze over when they hear abstract statistics, big ideas, grand plans, and long-range goals about ending hunger, like those advocated by Jeffrey Sachs and others. On the other hand, people in faith communities and in the body politic can relate to specific concrete ideas like a universal school lunch program or a way to reach out to women, children, and infants in need. The genius of your approach, as epitomized in the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program, is that people can understand and appreciate how it might work. In particular, persons can imagine how it would help support education, child development, and food security for some of the world's poorest children. What are your hopes and dreams for this approach?

Dole: Well, we are making some headway. I credit President Bill Clinton for getting it started and President George W. Bush for continuing it. We do not have enough money. And we could never appropriate enough money in the US to take care of 300 million children around the world. So, again, we need to make it a UN project. Senator McGovern was a leader of this when he was in Rome, as the USA ambassador to the UN agricultural organization.

It is probably not a kind thing to say, but I think some of the leaders in the developing countries do not pay much attention to the very poor people in their country. They must figure that that is where they are and where they are going to be and we should not spend any resources on them. At the same time that leader may have four or five homes across the country and a jet airplane and everything else.

What I think is needed is a lot of education and some constructive criticism. Our government might do it, but better by a consortium of governments. And then you get into the question of the very sensitive issue of birth control. But, I think everything has to be on the table. We know the United States cannot feed 300 million. But we know we can do much better than we are. We have allies like my wife Elizabeth and Senator Hillary Clinton working together on the Senate side, plus Congressman Jim McGovern [Democrat of Massachusetts] and Congresswoman Jo Ann Emerson [Republican of Missouri] on the House side. So we have some good allies. But we can do more. Our country can do more. But I think we need to keep reaching out and reminding other countries. I am not certain that is being done. Senator McGovern might have a better fix on that than me.

McGovern: In 1996 all the countries of the world gathered in Rome and committed themselves to cut in half the number of hungry people in the world by the year 2015. That is now only 10 years away and we are not moving quickly enough to achieve that commitment.

How are we going to get 400 million people off those hunger roles in the next 10-15 years? It occurred to me that the best way to do it is to begin with the village school. We have 300 million school-age kids who are not now being fed anything during the school day. 130,000 of those do not go to school, mostly girls. But when you start a school lunch program the girls and boys come. Nobody has found a magnet as powerful as food to get poor kids into the classroom. Once that happens, both the girls and boys show up. Their academic performance improves, when they have a full stomach. Their overall health improves.

Another interesting thing happens. Illiterate girls, who stay at home without education, start getting married at the age of 10, 11 or 12. Unbelievable! These little girls! And they have six children, on the average. The ones that go to school, even if it is just the first six elementary years, marry later in life. They are not as easy to push around by boys and men. They have a better sense of what life is all about. They have an average of only 2.9 children. So, on the strength of the school lunch program that gets the kids into school, you also tend to cut the birthrate in half.

Messer: Also, it has an impact on combating global HIV/AIDS, because young people, especially girls, who get an education defer their first sexual experiences, and, therefore, reduce the possibility of becoming infected with the virus. By addressing hunger, we are also reducing the likelihood of disease and early death. This is yet another dimension of the value of the McGovern-Dole legislative approach to ending hunger.

McGovern: Absolutely. Another thing I have encouraged is that, where you have a school lunch program like this, we should try to buy a significant part of that lunch from the local farmers. Buy the fruits, vegetables, dairy products, meat products, nuts, anything you can buy. That helps the farmers as well as feeds their children.

Another thing that we ought to do is to encourage the teachers and the children, to grow a garden around the school. Get some primitive implements and dig up the soil and plant carrots and beans and peas, corn, all the rest. There should be a garden around every schoolhouse in the world. That would be very helpful. It would be a way to get fresh, nutritious food. At the same time, it would teach the children how to plant food, something that would be useful to them the rest of their lives.

Additionally, there is more to do if we are to reach these 400 million hungry people. The school lunch program would reach 300 million, and probably take ten years to accomplish getting programs going all over the world. Secondly, the world needs a

preschool program that reaches pregnant and nursing mothers, which in the United States we call WIC for Women, Infants, and Children. Bob Dole and I are the authors of that program along with the late Hubert Humphrey. It is a wonderful program and we ought to do that worldwide. This would give us another 100 million, maybe 150 million, preschoolers and their young mothers.

That meets half the goal of feeding 800 million. I think we can do these things. We dare not just talk in vague terms, “Well, we’re going to cut hunger in half in the next 15 years.” How do you get your mind around that? I think the school lunch idea and the WIC program are something specific that everybody can understand. Certainly all Americans understand it. Other countries understand it. Definitely this is a program that ought to be under the jurisdiction of the United Nations but with the United States taking the lead.

Dole: It is going to take time. In Congress, you may not get your bill passed the first year, the second year, the third year. Maybe on the tenth year you might hit a double or a triple or a home run!

Messer: Bob, speaking of taking time to get legislation passed, I once heard you talk about how long it took to get the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 passed. As I recall, it took a long time before you were able to pass that landmark legislation.

Dole: We tried and we tried and we tried. Again, when we came down to getting it done, it was bi-partisanship: Democrats, Republicans, Liberals, Conservatives, and a Republican in the White House (number 41 Bush). It was one of the greatest sights I have ever seen on the White House lawn. People came with their white canes or in a wheelchair or on a gurney. I think there were 3,000 people there for the signing. And it was a sight to behold. The legislation stuck together, because it was bi-partisan.

Surplus Agricultural Commodities

Messer: Critics and skeptics question whether programs like the McGovern-Dole initiative are too dependant on surplus agricultural commodities, and, therefore, not sustainable. How do you respond?

Dole: Well, I think that is a consideration. We have plenty of storage space in America. And we restrain the farmer from producing what he can probably produce. The family farmers are getting fewer and fewer. I think one farmer now can produce what eight farmers produced ten or twenty years ago. I think that is probably a fair question, but I do not think it is particularly valid. I do not think that would happen. We have these huge elevators where you can store grain, so we are not going to run out in this country.

Messer: But does it make other countries too dependent on the United States and reduce incentives for other countries not to produce their own food?

Dole: Yes, it might make them too dependent. Another thing we have to watch, too, is that we do not want to disrupt their market, say by pouring wheat into a country. If they are trying to improve their economic viability with open markets; if they are raising a crop, we do not want to be competitive. That is yet another factor.

We have to make it clear that the United States certainly wants to be a principal player in ending hunger in our time. But we cannot do it alone, and we should not do it alone. There are a lot of reasons, not just because of the cost, but because you are going to have a better solution if there are more countries involved. You get more perspectives, and other countries may be better prepared than we are in certain parts of the globe.

McGovern: There’s some truth in the criticism that the McGovern-Dole initiative might be too dependent on surplus agricultural commodities, and thus not sustainable. The critics are not entirely wrong. That is why I say we ought to have a garden growing around

every village school. That is why I say we ought to purchase some of the commodities from local farmers. For example, we cannot ship fresh fruit and fresh vegetables all over the world. People should buy it in local markets. And that is one way to avoid the trap of making this program dependent on the availability of food surpluses in countries like the United States, Canada, Argentina, Australia and other food surplus areas.

Genetically Engineered Food

Messer: Controversies about regarding the causes of hunger and even the means of overcoming it. It is beyond the scope of our book to probe all these issues, but they are serious challenges, that must be addressed by those involved in ending hunger. Chief among them is the issue of genetically engineered foods.

Millions of Americans, Canadians, Australians, Argentines, and others have been eating these foods for more than a decade. Critics, however, claim that biotech foods are unsafe and threaten future food supplies. Anti-genetic food activists even persuaded some African governments facing famines in 2002 to return tons of World Food Program corn because it was produced in America using biotechnology. Resistance to using these foods is particularly strong in countries related to the European Union and by other activists concerned about issues of health, environment, trade, and so forth.

The dilemma, however, is that the probability of ending hunger in the near future without developing, promoting, and using genetically engineered foods is highly problematic. Biotech food appears to be an indispensable tool in meeting the world's daily needs for food. The United States Ambassador to the Vatican, Jim Nicholson, even has argued that "sharing the fruits of biotechnology with those who hunger is a moral imperative."

Senators McGovern and Dole, do you think world hunger can be eliminated without supporting genetically engineered food? Do you believe the opponents of genetic agriculture offer any realistic alternatives to feeding the hungry?

Dole: Don, I think a lot of it is political. As you said, we have been using genetically engineered food in several countries—U.S., Canada, and Australia—for ten, fifteen years. Maybe it has already been done, but there ought to be some way to bring agriculture ministers to this country or somewhere in Europe, and try to convince them it is safe and effective.

Obviously, we do not want to give anybody anything, or at a reduced cost, that is going to cause a health problem. And again, it takes time for something like this to happen—I was going to say, to wear down the opposition—but to put it in a positive way, to educate the people about the benefits.

I do not think we can make hunger history in the foreseeable future if we do not support and share genetically engineered food. But I do not understand some of the opposition, where the president of a country may have people starving, but refuses to let us give them genetically engineered food. It seems to be short sighted and insensitive.

McGovern: We want to be careful about genetically modified foods. On the other hand, we certainly do not want to rule out the application of science to the production of food. Look what hybrid seed corn has done for the Midwest and for other countries. Norman Borlaug, the great Nobel prize-winning expert on food production and author of the "green revolution," is a strong advocate of genetically modified foods because he thinks it is a good, clean, safe way to expand nutritious foods in the world and I agree with him.

I think we ought to do testing from time to time and we ought to apply the best brains we have to be sure we don't get into unnecessary difficulties with genetically modified foods but most of the food in our supermarkets right now is genetically modified already. I have not heard of anybody losing a leg or a brain or their eyesight or anything else because of these genetically modified foods. I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that three-fourths of all the food on the American supermarket shelf is genetically modified. We ought to share that knowledge with the rest of the world.

Messer: So, am I hearing you saying that we cannot feed the hungry without using genetically modified food in some way or other?

McGovern: That's my feel. We might be able to do it, but it would be at much greater cost and much greater difficulty and a much longer time before we achieved it. Let me give you the case of yellow rice, golden rice, as it's called. White rice, which most of the people of the world eat, is short on vitamin A. It is short on iron and on other essential food components. Scientists operating in Switzerland and Germany have developed golden rice, which has plenty of vitamin A. You are not going to go blind eating golden rice. You may go blind if you eat white rice only. You are not going to suffer from shortages of iron or other food nutrients, if you eat golden rice. Genetically modified rice is a wonderful breakthrough.

The Threat of International Terrorism

Messer: Especially since 9/11, the threat of terrorism has shaped much political thought and action. Most attention has focused on increasing national security, identifying potential terrorists, engaging in military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq, and expending dollars in countless ways to make Americans, in particular, to feel safer.

I was interested, therefore, to discover that at one point the two of you suggested that President George W. Bush should consider using \$5 billion of the first \$40 billion allocated by Congress in an effort to end hunger. How do you see the challenge of international terrorism, including agroterrorism, in relation to food security?

McGovern: I have always felt that terrorism is fed, in part, by the frustration and anger, and the sadness of not having enough to eat. Not having a decent house. Not having sanitary water. In my opinion the more we concentrate on getting at the causes of terrorism, the better off we are going to be. And one of those causes is certainly grinding hunger, which afflicts so many people around the globe.

Dole: That is a good point. However, we cannot lay everything at the feet of poverty. They are a lot of poor people, who instead of becoming terrorists have been great success stories in every country in the world, if they have an opportunity and equal human rights.

See what is happening in Iraq. They are going after oil on the theory that will damage the country's economic progress, or prevent any progress. I assume, if Iraq had any big food supplies, they would be going after that too. Thus we have to be careful. We have to protect food supplies not only in Iraq, but also in the United States and elsewhere. Terrorists are not going to go out into a field and start pulling up the wheat crop, when they can go to an elevator, storage center, or warehouse, and destroy the grain or the cattle, or whatever. It is yet another thing we put on the list when we start talking about ports and railroads and airlines. Terrorists can poison the food, and they can do a lot of things that would make it unsafe. We have to understand that this is a threat. It may not be on the top on their list, but it would really cause havoc if they were able to destroy the food supply in any part of the world.

The Threat of Global HIV/AIDS

Messer: Every week the global HIV/AIDS kills more people than the terrorists who attacked the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Worldwide more than 42 million people are infected and 20 plus million already have died. South Africa alone has lost 20% of its farmers to the disease in the last five years with another 20% likely to die by 2020. Malnutrition and food insecurity weaken people's immune system, making them more susceptible to HIV infection and the onset of AIDS. Increasingly it is evident that lack of food and hunger are closely related to the HIV crisis.

Dole: No doubt about it. If you look at the HIV/AIDS cases on television from around the world, you will note they are generally the poorest of the poor. That may not be true in every case because obviously it spreads from rich to poor and vice versa. But again, if we

were going to lift somebody out of poverty and give persons opportunities, they have to have food.

We have learned that, if you particularly give young children a chance to have a meal, there will be more young people going to school. In school they are likely to learn about the danger of AIDS. The churches, and other faith communities, in those countries need to be involved, too, in educating and teaching the young people. The case is that the young girls are apparently overlooked, particularly in some of the African countries. The males have priority; they go to school and they get the food. Too often the girls start marrying at age twelve. Without education this is not going to change very much, so education is every country.

Messer: Yes, the global school lunch program the two of you are advocating could impact the global HIV/AIDS pandemic. By creating incentives for children to attend school, you would provide opportunities for educational programs aimed at prevention, care, and overcoming stigmatization and discrimination.

Dole: Certainly they are not going to get any AIDS information if they are not attending some forum where they can get an education, where they can learn about the dangers, and told about abstinence or whatever program that might be available.

McGovern: AIDS is a terrible menace. I do not know what the answer is other than to try to convince young men around the world to use condoms. If they don't, they are going to spread any infection they have to their female partners, or they are going to pick up something from the infected women. We know that condoms will work. They do not interfere with sexual pleasure and they provide sanitary relationships. We have got to encourage that! I know that some people say abstinence is the best cure. Well, good luck!

Human beings have been having sex with each other ever since Adam and Eve and you can't shut it down. Freud says it's the most powerful of all human drives. So the best thing to do is recognize that

young people ARE going to be sexually active and to try to educate them on the importance of engaging in protected sex, rather than this reckless commitment that comes when there are no protective devices used.

Messer: The credo of public health prevention activists worldwide has been labeled "ABC" for abstinence, being faithful, and condoms. Sometimes I think the "c" stands for controversy, however, since few persons in the political and religious community are as candid as you, Senator McGovern. You would have appreciated the poster I saw in Great Britain at the start of the war in Iraq. It featured condoms and read: "Weapons of Mass Protection"! It also noted that every 6 seconds someone in the world is infected with HIV.

How People of Faith Should Respond

McGovern: Combating hunger is critical to dealing both with AIDS and terrorism, as well as other global threats. Persons of faith should accept the challenge of eliminating hunger both in the United States and throughout the world.

I do not think you can be a Christian, Jew, Muslim, or a Buddhist and ignore hunger. Every one of those religions demands its adherents to feed the hungry. Jesus says, "Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these, you have done it unto me." That is the way Christians serve the Lord. In this regard, there is nothing original about this for any of us. We three are all Christians. We simply believe there is a spiritual and moral responsibility to feed the hungry.

Every church member, every synagogue member, every Muslim, every Buddhist, ought to make sure that their church has an overseas arm and a domestic arm that reaches out to the hungry. My father—a Wesleyan Methodist minister, very conservative—believed implicitly that we are obligated to feed the hungry. In those dark, depression days growing up in South Dakota, I never remember my father ever once turning down a hungry person that knocked on our

door and asked for food. Those young men riding the rails West were looking for jobs. That was drilled into me.

You know, we would enjoy our own food better, if we knew that everybody else had more. How can you seat at a gourmet restaurant and spend \$25 for a meal and enjoy it knowing that right outside in the street there are people who cannot make ends meet. So, Christians and Jews and other people of faith have a moral and spiritual obligation to deal with this problem of hunger.

Dole: Yes, all three of us are Methodists, but feeding the hungry applies to all faiths—Protestants and Catholics, Jews and Muslims. Everybody can participate, and the more people who participate in making hunger history, the better off the world is going to be.

Certainly the church is a great incubator. The church can start to educate people—business leaders, housewives, and all kinds of people who have contacts with others every day. We need to spread the word about how to conquer hunger. I always thought in my political career that I would rather have a hundred people out there saying, “Bob Dole has done something good” than an ad on television knocking my opponent.

Messer: Senator Dole, you have demonstrated remarkable political success and made a great contribution to America. If you were to have any fear about what is going to happen to the effort to feed the hungry in the world, what would that fear be?

Dole: Apathy. I mean, some people look at it and say, “It’s just too big. We cannot solve it, so let’s not do anything. These young people are going to die. There are other priorities we have to deal with.” I do not subscribe to that. I do not think President Bush subscribes to that. I am almost certain he does not. But Senator McGovern and I hope to visit with him in a couple of weeks, to see if we cannot encourage him to do even more with reference to our program. Not because our name is on it. That is not even relevant. It is because people are starving, young babies and young children are growing

up without an education. They are turning to crime and they are turning to terrorism.

Messer: Both of you men could be enjoying a quiet retirement. But here we are, March 2005, and you both have been out of the Senate for a long time. Yet you are as active as ever.

Dole: George and I look ahead. Let’s say we have four or five good years left, so our goal is just to keep prodding the people who can make these changes happen.

McGovern: Well, I work as hard as I ever did. I expect someday just to drop in my tracks, working at some useful task. I think it was Harry Emerson Fosdick who defined happiness some years ago as being engaged in some useful task that benefited others. That is the only way I can do it. I cannot be happy just going out and making money. I wish I had a lot of money. There are a lot of things I could do with it. But I would not be happy doing nothing but making money. Now there’s nothing wrong with making money, if you give away some of it to the poor and the sick. But I get my satisfaction out of things like working for the universal school lunch program.

Messer: Senators, I appreciate not only your lifetime of commitment and involvement in making hunger history. What motivated you to want a book that was particularly addressed to persons of faith?

McGovern: Because I think if we can get the churches and the synagogues and the mosques behind this effort, it will go. I think we ought to press our churches to make sure they have a good world-service arm and a good domestic philanthropic arm that addresses hunger. That is why I thought a book of this kind, aimed primarily at people of faith, would be a constructive effort.

Dole: Don, I would thank you for your great effort. Senator McGovern and I are just sort of bit players.

One reason I got involved in this book is that it is hard to get Congress to focus on something that is happening some ten thousand miles away. There is nobody in Washington, D.C. from the African countries to lobby for certain food programs. They probably cannot afford to engage people who do that for a living. So, it is easy for somebody in Congress to say, “Well, nobody’s bothered me about this. Nobody’s talked to me about this. Why should I worry about it?” There is got to be some way—maybe we do it through our churches. They can be very effective in lobbying—they could have a special section where they would organize and petition Congress or petition the state legislatures. If they are dealing with hunger in their own state, they will want to work on the legislature. If they are dealing with international hunger, they will want to work with Congress. But it is pretty easy to forget about domestic or world hunger. I know from experience. If nobody tells you about it and nobody educates the member of Congress about it, how would they have any real concern? Maybe they will see something on television, but we’ve just got to keep pestering people until they get the message.

Messer: The Child Nutrition Foundation recently honored both of you for your tireless efforts for ending hunger in the world. Former presidents Bill Clinton, George Bush, and Jimmy Carter sent words of congratulations and appreciation for your determination. George, I especially liked the way you ended your acceptance speech. It epitomizes the spirit of political bi-partisanship and theological thinking that inspired this book and seeks to motivate persons of faith to act in making hunger history. Would you sing it once again?

McGovern: “He’s got the whole wide world in his hands
 He’s got all the hungry children in his hands
 He’s got the Child Nutrition Foundation in his hands
 He’s got Bob and Elizabeth Dole in his hands
 He’s got the whole wide world in his hands.”

Questions for Reflection

1. If you were to ask the authors a question about making hunger history, what would it be?
2. What concerns, if any, do you have about genetically engineered food?
3. In relation to hunger in the world, how do you view the threats of international terrorism and global HIV/AIDS?
4. Karl Popper once described plans to end poverty as either reflecting “utopian social engineering” versus “piecemeal democratic reform.” How would you characterize the ideas for ending hunger presented in this book?
5. What do you think the role of the church and other faith communities should be in combating hunger both domestically and internationally?

Recommended Further Reading

- Norman E. Borlaug, “20th Century Lessons for the 21st World,” and Per Pinstrup-Andersen, “Achieving the 2020 Vision in the Shadow of International Terrorism,” in *Perspectives in World Food and Agriculture 2004*, edited by Colin G. Scanes and John A. Miranowski (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2005).
- Jeffrey D. Sachs, *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities For Our Time* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005.)
- Jim Monke, “Agroterrorism: Threats and Preparedness,” *Congressional Research Service Report to Congress*, Library of Congress, August 13, 2004. See <http://www.fas.org/irp/crs/RL32521.pdf>
- For updated information relating hunger and global HIV/AIDS, check the International Food Policy Research Institute (<http://www.ifprfi.org>)