

# THE RAM'S HORN

Newsletter of the Nutrition Policy Institute

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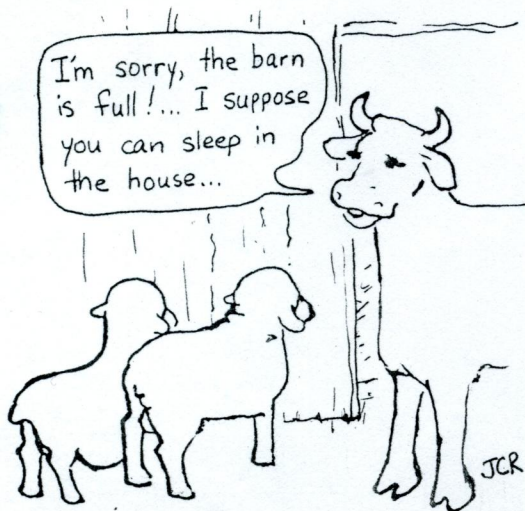
No. 29

December, 1985

## ALL-IS-POSSIBLE

On Christmas Day, as the feeble light that made its way through the fog was dwindling, I went for a walk through the familiar fields across the brook. Everything was fuzzy, simplified by the fog formed by the warm air settling on the snow-covered ground. There is something comforting about such a situation - all the complexities of landscape are lost in grey, fuzzy simplicities of outline. In a world that seems increasingly beyond our control, the simplicity of the feast of the baby Jesus is similarly reassuring.

What a contrast to the confusion, expectation, and guilt aroused by the cheap Christmas music and gift-giving promotion of the Market Society. Would we not be better off with a state, and a culture, that was truly secular, that made no pretense of honouring the Christian faith. Then at least we would know where we stood.



Down with Baby Jesus! Down with Maudlin Mary! Out with the shepherds and the lowing cattle! The whole scene is little more than fantasy and sentiment anyway. What's a cow any more? Down with this 'celebration' that teaches individualism and destroys community!

The public embrace of the infantile imagery does give us a break from the very real fears and threats that crowd our daily lives. It does speak to the yearning for simple virtues and moral clarity. But the imagery does not empower us to deal with the causes of those real threats and fears. The militarization of our lives (war toys included) will continue as long as we celebrate only some vague sentiment about the "miracle" of Christmas as the excuse for consumer debauchery.

The message, the celebration, of Christmas is the presence of God in history. Jesus came into the world as an infant, dependent on the human community in which he lived. That is an affirmation of this world and of our place in it and our responsibility to it.

The life and ministry of Jesus are inseparable from the birth. And the life was one of both rejoicing in the world and transforming it so that there would be a place for all in the human community: the captives to be freed, the hungry to be fed, the sick healed. Above all, the message of Christmas is that one of God's names is "All-Is-Possible". WE CAN heal the sick and liberate the captives and feed the hungry. God will not do it in spite of us, but only through us.

This is the miracle of Christmas. Hard to believe. Harder to respond to. But where else is hope?

B.K.

SOME THOUGHTS WHILE FALL PLOWING

by Al Slater

(Al Slater farms near St. Mary's, Ontario)

October is the plowing month. It's a time when the tractor is on "automatic pilot" with its front wheel stuck in the furrow. Watching the rich black soil turning in three ribbons behind the plow promotes a lot of thinking.

My mind focusses on an item from CBC Radio's FYI show with Sheila Rogers. An animal rights activist had been featured explaining why she was demonstrating against the sale of veal at McDonalds and Burger King. She went on to explain the inhumane treatment of calves that are raised for "white veal". Then a representative from Burger King came on to explain that they were very careful only to buy "red veal".

I put the wheel in the furrow and started to think about our own situation with veal. We are dairy farmers. A few years ago our children had seen a white veal operation and we vowed then and there never to sell any more calves to the white veal people. We started raising a few of our own bull calves, feeding them milk, grain and hay. We have them processed by a local butcher and then sell them to friends and acquaintances. We guarantee that our calves are healthy and have not been fed antibiotics. The rest of our calves are sold to a neighbour, a young widow with two children who is trying to keep her farm for her family by raising red veal calves the same way we do. She raises quite a few calves so she relies on markets like the ones McDonalds and Burger King have developed. I am left wondering why animal rights people who are concerned about "white veal" don't go to those who sell and eat "white veal" to mount protests. Destroying the red veal market will only drive people like us back to selling calves to white veal producers.

The land I am plowing has been in hay or pasture for three years straight. This means that in the whole three years the land has not been plowed or re-seeded. It has not been bare at any time so no wind or water erosion has occurred. The land being turned over is full of roots and worms; a healthy state of affairs. We try to run a "low-entropy" farm. We are labour intensive. Our cows go to pasture in the summer and we feed them hay and grain in the winter. Most of our land is covered in grass and hay so we don't have erosion problems. With this kind of crop rotation we need no pesticides and not a great deal of fertilizer. Our energy requirements are low because our machinery is small and old to match the small amount of crop we grow each year.

I come to the end of the field just as the ring-billed gulls fly in to feast on the worms. They are beautiful birds, vibrant, raucous as they glide down with heads turning to search the ground for worms. But we cannot allow all our worms to be systematically eaten by these hordes. The gulls carefully pounce on the exact three furrows I have just turned and grab the worms before they can withdraw into the ground. So I reach for the .22 sitting on the tractor. I take a couple of shots to scare the birds off. They all lift off then circle and land again. Sadly, I accept my next task. I draw bead on an unfortunate gull and pull the trigger. Thousands of gulls rise and leave for an hour or so. But one takes a couple of steps then flops on the ground. I run over to break its neck so it won't suffer. Its body lies there, a cool wind blowing its feathers, serving as

a warning to gulls not to land. The body haunts me as I travel round and round the field. I hate shooting birds.

But why am I plowing during the day like this? Most years I simply plow at night when the gulls are not feeding. But this is the year that I have to accept the reality of the market. Consumers are using less beef and dairy products. Some, like ourselves, have cut back a little on meat for health reasons. Others, including some of our friends, are starting to see vegetarianism as some sort of moral statement. For us on this dairy farm it means that we have made a substantial cut in our cow herd. More land has to be plowed and planted to something vegetarians will buy and eat. They don't eat hay and pasture so our rotation won't be quite as good. There will be less roots and worms in our plowed ground in a few years. Our land won't get as much manure as it has in the past. If things get much worse we will be back to using chemical weed control because our choices of crop rotations to kill weeds will be severely limited.

I don't want to complain about soybean growers or people who use them. Soybeans are an important food crop. But the crop worries me. In Asia soybeans are grown using labour intensive methods. In the rest of the world soybeans have become a "high-tech" crop. In third world countries like Brazil land has been taken from the peasants for multi-national companies who grow soybeans for export while local populations remain malnourished. Here in Ontario land planted to soybeans remains bare in the spring until early June. Soil is subject to wind and water erosion for a long time. I suspect that a good deal of organic matter is oxidized by the sun during the long days at that time of year. Beans seem to like a fine seed bed and they grow close to the ground so the land has to be carefully leveled at planting time for proper harvesting. By the time the beans are planted the soil is worked to find that very little structure remains. After harvest the land is black again because the bean straw provides very little coverage. Some bean stubble gets planted to winter wheat but the rest lays black and vulnerable all winter. I really hope I don't have to start growing soybeans.

As I start down another long furrow I am left with a lot of questions. Will my soil ever be as good again now I am forced to cut back on hay and pasture in the rotation? Will there ever be as many worms again? How much new machinery will be needed to match the increase in crop acreage? How will it be paid for? And how much more fuel will be used? Will people around the world be better fed as we switch from animal production to grain and soybean production? Is there not already a glut of beans and grain while people are starving?

I look up from the tractor wheel rolling down the furrow. There in the middle of the farm are the two oaks standing side by side. They first put their roots into the soil 130 years ago when my great-grandparents first came here. Over in the pasture are the cows. Their ancestry reaches back to that time on this farm too.

Some people are vegetarians who reject animal products. Some people are bankers who reject us as inefficient. Some people are polluters who send acid rain and fouled air over our land. Are these people rootless?

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Bart Hall-Beyer, a mixed farm operator from Quebec, speaking to the Agriculture in Transition Conference in Wolfville, N.S., in November: "The veggies in the audience need to remember that in our climate, ecological agriculture requires a forage base, which requires livestock to eat the forage, which require people to eat the meat."

Some 800 people - mostly male - filled the Government conference centre in Ottawa for the annual Agricultural Outlook Conference Dec. 9-10. I was one of them, and I promise not to do it again.

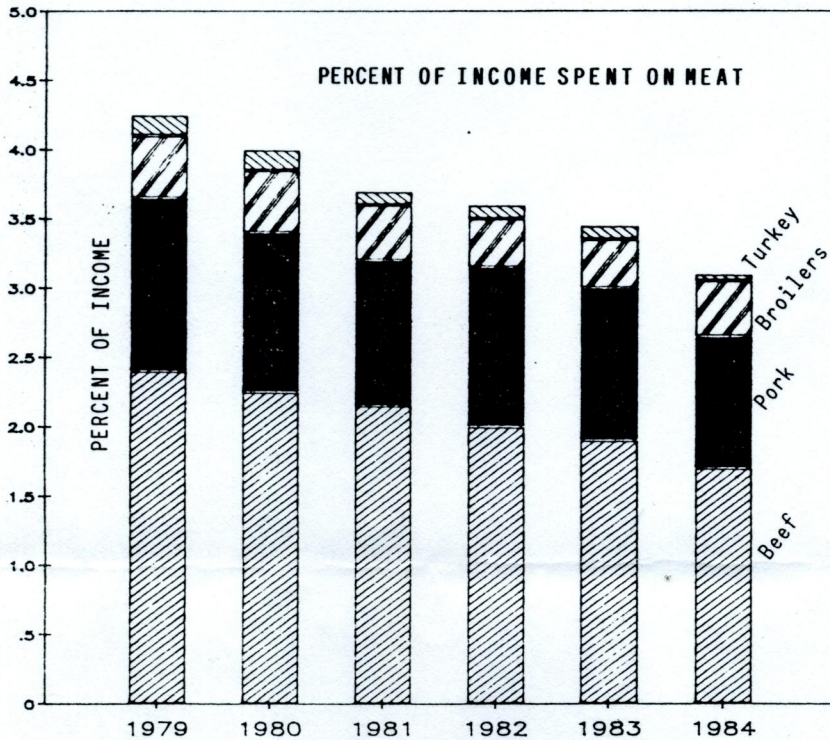
I went out of curiosity: to find out if there was more to the event than the published proceedings. Well, the most striking characteristic of most of the presentations was their lack of analysis, and their total lack of structural analysis. Of course it

is this superficiality that enabled the Deputy Minister of Agriculture to announce, at the closing reception, that the conference had been a "success". I suspect that not even the baptism of Jesus was given such an authoritative benediction. Next year, I will scan the published reports when it suits me.

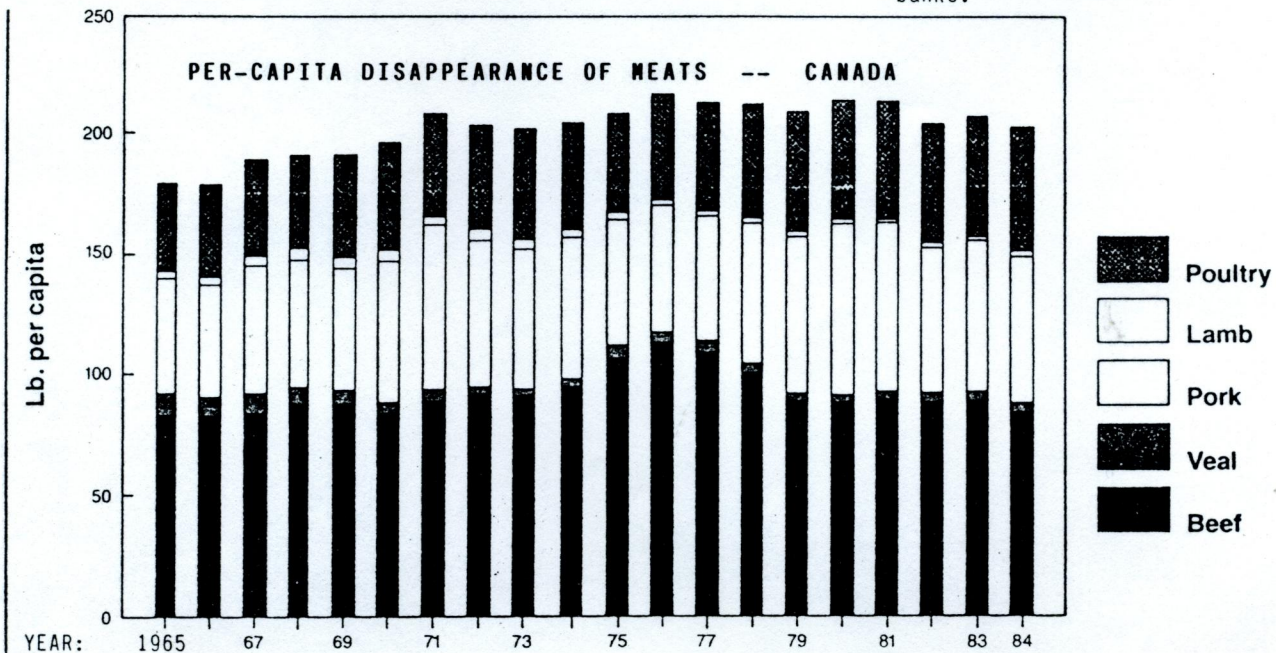
Of course, it's not the formal sessions that are significant; but the politicking that goes on at the hotels is for those on expense accounts (I stayed with old friends).

I should add, however, that I did enjoy the morning session on Food, which was a discussion by representatives of the retail, wholesale, and manufacturing sectors of the food system. The 'private' sector, as represented there, does know what it is doing, and unlike many in the audience, they took my question about their responsibilities in regards to food banks seriously. They acknowledge these as part of our food system and said they needed to develop more efficient ways to meet the needs of soup kitchens and food banks.

B.K.



Graphs from Breeder & Feeder (Ont. Cattlemen's Assoc.)



*"The North American beef cattle industry this year has been characterized by a poor financial position."*

AgCanada Market Commentary 9/85

*from an article in ENROUTE, the Air Canada magazine, 10/85:*

This strategy combines the interaction of three concepts.

a) Innovation—This is the very heart of marketing. It can be a most effective strategy and it is expensive to copy.

b) Aggression—Marketing is aggression-based. We must learn to attack and annihilate the competition. Is it not the purpose of competition to eliminate your competitor? Create the impression for consumers that in your unique market segment only you can produce the products and benefits that will truly meet their long-term needs. As a result, you can earn above-average profits and the incremental cash flow to ensure your long-term survival.

c) Domination—Our goal is not just to get our piece of the pie, but also to be totally market-dominant and to seek the weakness of the competition. If you identify that weakness and spend some time attacking it, it can prove to be a powerfully disabling strategy and very expensive for competitors to combat.

The BEEF INFORMATION CENTRE is the national beef promotion agency financed by the Canadian Cattlemen's Association. It is not, however, supported by Manitoba or Quebec.

The Beef Sounds Good campaign ran for 22 weeks on TV at a cost of \$1.6 million in 1982. In 1985 the same amount of TV time for the Jack Spratt campaign would have cost an additional \$1 million, so the BIC chose to give it one-third less coverage for the same price. They are not sure, however, that the reduced coverage will be sufficient to change consumer attitudes.

36% of the secondary schools in Canada are using the Build Better Bodies with Beef kit in their home economics and life sciences classes, and half of the primary schools have the kit Canada is Cattle Country.

The BIC, as part of the CCA, is supported by a check-off on cattle as they are sold by the farmer or feeder. The Cattlemen's Association, as the name suggests, is among the more right-wing farm organizations.

► Canadians also fail to understand that marketing is an aggressive and, to a certain extent, even a militaristic art requiring unique leadership and organizational direction if the company is to survive and prosper.

*from the Globe & Mail, 24/9/85:*

Reuter

OAK BROOK, Ill.

McDonald's Corp. of Oak Brook says it is opening stores in six more countries this year.

It said it added 145 restaurants to its worldwide chain during the third quarter to give it a total of 8,648 outlets. An additional 270 restaurants are under construction.

McDonald's said it is opening restaurants in six more countries during 1985. Starting with Thailand

earlier in the year, outlets were added in Luxembourg, Bermuda and Venezuela during the third quarter, with Italy and Mexico due by the end of the year. The company said it will be operating in 41 countries by 1986.

It reported that third-quarter profit rose 12 per cent to \$128.1-million (U.S.) from \$114.3-million a year earlier, while sales were up 10 per cent to \$2.98-billion from \$2.7-billion.

*from BREEDER & FEEDER, the publication of the Ontario Cattlemen's Association 10/85:*

### Should or Shouldn't we Advertise Beef on T.V.?

#### How Much Money is Spent on T.V.?

The total promotional budget for BIC including advertising, is currently just under 3.5 million nationally. Of this, 1.3 million is spent on T.V. (media and production), just over one-third of the total budget. This leaves almost two-thirds for other programs and administration.

#### What is our Advertising and Promotional Objective?

The major problem facing the industry is consumer concern about the healthfulness of beef (particularly the fat, calorie and cholesterol content). All consumer research (both in Canada and the U.S.) over the past 1½ years verifies this fact. In a March 1985 study, 75% of Canadian consumers expressed serious concerns about meats' healthfulness.

Our objective is therefore to improve consumer demand for beef by improving these attitudes.

#### What Vehicle Best Deals with Attitudes?

T.V. and magazine advertising, as well as public relations, are effective in changing attitudes. They create images of the product, provide product information etc., all of which influence a consumer's attitude towards that product.

On the other hand, retail point-of-sale is a sales promotion vehicle. While it is effective in stimulating in-store sales, it does little to change attitudes or to get customers to the meat counter.

In order to reach the 75% of consumers with nutritional concerns, a mass media approach (such as T.V.) is essential. The ideal marketing plan involves a variety of elements each speaking to the consumer in a different way, at a different time, and it's the cumulative effect of all these messages that changes the consumer's attitude and thereby alters her behaviour. T.V. forms the basis on which all other programs can build.

The following article was clipped from the current CUSO JOURNAL, an annual publication of CUSO (135 Rideau Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5H5). This July/85 issue is entitled FOOD & DEVELOPMENT and contains many interesting articles.

## The 'Hamburgerization' of the World

by Annelies Allain

There is more to eating than feeding a body. And there is more to the selling of hamburgers than the delivery of food.

Less than 30 years ago the people of Hamburg had never tasted, seen or heard of anything called a hamburger. And although there were sausages in Frankfurt and Vienna, the 'hot dog' cult started in the United States. Today, millions of hamburgers and frankfurters are sold daily throughout the world in fierce competition with a great variety of local foods.

Fast-food chains are invading the Third World. And with the 'big Macs', the hot dogs and the milkshakes comes a change in values, a change in lifestyles. The teenagers of Trengganu, Malaysia, crowd into the brightly-lit, air-conditioned, plastic surroundings of the town's only Whimpey's. Kentucky Fried Chicken is the favorite for birthday parties of middle-class Filipino school-children. And Bangkok opened its first Dairy Queen in December 1984 with big newspaper headlines.

Real American food is like the real American movies that dominate television in Asia. Food and beverage processors have been quick to cash in on the myth that imported goods are 'better'. First the soft drinks and the infant formulas and now the hamburgers and marshmallows. After all, 70 per cent of all consumers live in developing countries. However low their income, some of it can be syphoned off to be spent on fast foods, on that occasional taste of 'Dallas' and the feeling of being 'in' with the latest fashion.

As in the West, pervasive advertising campaigns are being used to persuade consumers of the 'need' to try new and modern foods.

Young people, who already have a natural tendency to turn away from traditional values held by elders in the family and in the community, are easy victims of advertising claims. Added to that is the ploy of most fast-food chains to hire teenager sellers for their wares. The snappy, flashy uniforms of these kids makes them into clever, enviable models for their jobless peers and the younger customers. They're taught how to serve quickly and efficiently, be polite and wear a permanent smile. What the uniform hides is the way they are often exploited by being underpaid and constantly harassed about the need to work faster and smile more . . . or leave their job to someone else.

And much of the advertising is directed to an even younger consumer. The Australian Consumers' Association did a survey of television advertising and found a concentration of food ads in the post-school viewing hours. Fast foods, sugared cereals, ice-creams and sweet snacks were the products advertised most often. A child watching television for three hours a day after school would see in one week at least 10 to 15 ads for a hamburger chain like McDonald's. One can imagine the impact of such repetitive brainwashing. Is the child to blame if it makes faces at cooked vegetables, brown bread or rice? Are the parents to blame if they finally give in and take the kids out to their favorite snackbar? Millions of dollars are spent on producing the best TV commercials to be screened during peak hours with no other aim than getting children to persuade their parents to buy a certain product.

Kids are the same the world over and advertising is very similar too. Certain jingles and other techniques that have sold well in the West are reproduced with minor changes for use in the Third World. Some commercially sponsored programs are taken over wholesale with the ads. They show a lifestyle which is incompatible with Third World realities and yet is presented it as a model to be aspired to by everyone. The same tactics are employed in labelling. The baby formulas which sold best in poor countries were those showing glamorous blond mothers and healthy blue-eyed babies. Now that public education campaigns like the Nestlé-boycott have managed to force a removal of such idealized pictures from infant formulas, the manufacturers are shifting very similar pictures to their baby cereal, juices and weaning foods.

An analysis of the Australian television commercial survey showed that 76 per cent of the ads gave no nutritional information about the produce. Instead there were a great many ambiguous and ill-founded claims which gave the viewers a thoroughly unbalanced and distorted picture. The food ads aimed at children were even worse. Some 90 per cent conflicted with official guidelines on nutritional education. Whether we like it or not, television is rapidly becoming a key source of education for many children especially in the sprawling urban centres of developing countries. And while

the Australian Consumers' Association may be successful in securing some changes toward less brutal misinformation in public advertising, many Third World countries will be slower to act.

Meanwhile prophets of doom tell us that worse is still to come. The video-revolution is in full bloom in most developing countries. While individual ownership of video machines is still mostly confined to the elite and upper middle-classes, we have noted a surprising number of machines in public eating places even in small towns in Thailand. Once the machine is there, it is used non-stop. You can see James Bond for breakfast, a cowboy film for lunch and King Kong for supper. Similar menus are offered on the national Malaysian Railways where you have to make a special booking if you want to be in a carriage without a blaring video on both sides. These video programs also carry advertising. The more ads, the cheaper the video. And the gloomy forecast is that the more advertising on TV and in cinemas is regulated, the more manufacturers will turn to financing video programs which will carry their ads and are not yet subject to control. So much for the informal sector of public education.

In the more formal sector, things are not always better. Some primary schools in Hong Kong and in Manila have contracts with large hamburger chains to come and sell lunches on the school premises. The consumers associations in Malaysia successfully fought the threat of a similar deal after initial talks between a large transnational and the Ministry of Education. In Kuala Lumpur the consumers have joined hands with a group of school canteen operators who agree that soft-drink and junk-food sellers should not be allowed to do business in schools. It's a difficult battle because it's backed by big money.

Big money and big business. The potential size of the world market for fast foods, as seen through the eyes of any big hamburger chain, is limitless. In most countries, the stage is set: there is a general idea that West is best and imported is better than local. National businessmen are eager to take on franchise manufacturing and selling and the techniques of developing an effec-

tive distribution and promotion system have been tested and refined. Even in China, the first U.S.-style hamburger restaurant is about to be opened. 'We think we can sell 3000 hamburgers a day,' said the Director of the Beijing Food Industry office. Posters of Donald Duck are to be used to promote the new foods which will also include fried chicken, hot dogs and french fries.

There will be plenty of help should the Chinese require any in switching from rice to french fries. The few corporations which control the international fast food chains are obsessed with the need to grow, to expand their market share faster than their competitors. The big profits are in processing and control of the vertical food chain, from the farmer in whatever country to the consumer even on the other side of the world. Control means the power to dictate prices and policies and to get a steady revenue from local operators who pay handsome percentages of their total turnover to the mother company. McDonald's franchise holders pay 11.5 per cent of annual gross sales. Its outlets around the world generated a total of US\$7.8 billion in 1982. Very little of it went to the farmer who produced the raw material.

**N**utritionally, poor countries also stand to lose more than they will gain in the hamburger wars. Menus of the new fast food places are monotonous and almost always contain too much fat, too much salt and too much sugar. All of these are linked to health risks. The preservatives, flavorings and color additives, all prevalent in processed foods, are linked to allergies and toxic effects.

Fast food menus are also lacking in vegetables, fruit and fibre. For a long time the producers shrugged about these accusations and claimed that consumers should make up for the missing ingredients by eating salads and fresh fruit at home. It took years of criticism and a final hard-hitting label — junk food — to make the major chains pay attention and adapt their menus. In the rich countries there now are salads, low-calorie burgers and real fruit juices available from many fast food outlets. But it took years of fighting, battles which are not likely to be taken up soon in poor countries where the analysis of a typical fast food dinner still reads too much fat, salt and sugar. Did you know that tomato ketchup contains up to 40 per cent sugar?

Introducing this type of food in countries where the overriding problem is the lack of enough food for all is adding insult to injury. In many countries, particularly the poorer, developing countries, local agriculture is being more and more distorted to fit the

needs of multinational food producers who cater to the well-to-do. Rich agricultural land in Brazil, for example, is being used to grow soya to feed cattle in the U.S. McDonald's alone needs half a million head of cattle a year to make its estimated annual four billion hamburgers. The cereals and beans that could be grown on the land now used for soya would provide seven times more calories than the soya transformed into hamburger meat. Furthermore, these calories would more likely be consumed by the local population, rather than feeding cattle for affluent and overfed Europeans and North Americans.

There are many examples of how production goes not to where it is needed but to those who can pay. The cats and dogs of North America have more purchasing power than most Latin Americans and therefore have access to better food. In Mexico, in Egypt and in Mali, we have seen how extensive production of strawberries and other out-of-season fruits for Western markets was officially encouraged because the foreign currency it generated helped the governments of those countries to pay for wheat imports.

White bread is not a traditional food in any of those countries. But since colonial times it has been made into a symbol of affluence, a 'modern' convenience food which the city people cannot miss. Recently, the African consumer magazine, *Vivre Autrement*, documented how Senegal could save 1.5 billion CFA francs, the equivalent of a quarter of the annual national health budget, if the Senegalese were to agree to eat fewer 'Parisian baguettes' and instead ate better bread with some 15 per cent local millet flour! The habit, however, is still deeply entrenched. There are powerful interests which mean to keep the food dependency that way and even increase it. U.S. wheat growers produce so much that the government has to pay them to keep some of their land fallow. When satellites predict bumper harvests in the U.S.S.R., Kansas farmers groan because they will be stuck with surplus grain. In an effort to increase worldwide consumption, the farmers' union sent a dozen bakers to China with the explicit mission of teaching the Chinese how to make donuts. Wheat flour, of course, is also used to make the round buns for hamburgers, the long buns for hot-dogs and the quick crusts for pizzas.

**L**eading in the 'burger battles' has been Land still is McDonald's. Last September the company started training the first three Yugoslavs who will be setting up shop in Belgrade soon. In November 1984, the first 'Big Mac' opened in Bangkok making Thailand the 32nd McDonald country. Part of the success in McDonald's marketing is due to the uniformity required by its mass production, which is presented as an asset:

'You can walk into a McDonald's and get a hamburger, french fries and a shake in less than 50 seconds, and the meal will taste just the same in Tallahassee as it does in Tacoma — or, for that matter, Tokyo. The hamburger will weigh exactly 1.6 ounces and will arrive on a bun exactly 3½ inches across, garnished with precisely one-fourth of an ounce of minced onions. The french fries will have been cooked within the past seven minutes, the hamburger in the last ten. What's more, the bathroom will be clean and the parking lot free of teenage troublemakers'. (*Everybody's Business* Nov., 1983) The assumption is that, if tastes for food around the world are not yet the same, they can be made to converge. The secret to it all is the right local touch to global marketing. Advertising firms specialise nowadays in extremely sophisticated selling campaigns which can be slightly modified to incorporate cultural differences.

In today's hamburger world this has paid dividends. *Asia Magazine* (Jan., 1984) reported that McDonald's stipulates that each franchise operation must allocate four per cent of its budget to advertising. Even in old established markets, it is advertising, and mostly TV advertising, which decides where people will go for their fast food lunch. The top five chains in the U.S. spent US\$610 million in advertising in 1981, US\$730 million in 1982, with a similar 20 per cent increase in 1983.

Consumers in most cases are easily caught. There is little awareness of the multi-million dollar spending which goes on behind their backs to make their decisions for them and then finance it out of the purchases they make. No-one is spending money to protect traditional dishes. Food values are slowly eroded and standardized at a global level. But there is more to eating than feeding a body. There are social, cultural and emotional/psychological overtones which are severely underestimated and undervalued.

Unfortunately there are only few countries which have so far resisted the hamburgerization of their societies. One such nation is Morocco which banned McDonald's in order to 'protect the country's way of life and its thousands of traditional kebab and cake stalls'. Indonesia banned all television advertising which cuts deeply into the preferred method of promotion of fast food chains. In France, fast food is catching on despite loud and vicious protests about the mediocrity of American tastes. In most Third World countries it seems the hamburgerization will grind on, to the expense of local dishes and national food values. By using sophisticated promotion, power hungry multinationals are likely to succeed in manipulating more and more unsuspecting consumers and increasing their dependency. Economic, cultural and political dependency.

The Second National Farm Women's Conference would like to thank the following businesses and individuals for their generous contributions.

Please support these sponsors.

(partial list)

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## NATIONAL FARM WOMEN'S CONFERENCE REPORT

If the list of sponsors, including McCains, Irvings, Cargill, etc. had not alerted me, the sexist humour of the guest speakers should have: this conference was carefully designed to call for cosmetic, not fundamental, changes in the system which has caused the current farm financial crisis. When I came home I was so upset that I didn't even want to report on it. I was upset for two reasons: one was the placid assumption that all farm women are married, and married to insensitive clods who tramp mud on the sparkling kitchen floor which is the centrepiece of our lives. The other was the deep personal pain so poignantly and powerfully described by so many women as they talked about their own and their communities' struggles to survive in agriculture.

It is really too easy, as the conference wound up doing, to respond to this genuine pain by calling for an immediate farm debt moratorium until we get some things sorted out. Of course the financial crisis must be dealt with; but we must also deal with the immediate social crisis - the call by many of the conference delegates for crisis lines in the rural areas to deal with alcoholism, wife-beating, and suicide; and for day-care and other human supports - and we must deal with the long-term direction of our food policy in this country.

As one of its stated goals, the conference proposed to set up a national farm women's "network" with delegates from all the provinces and (presumably) government financing. In the event, the delegate selection procedure proved the undoing of this agenda. At least in Nova Scotia, delegates were selected by a committee headed by the chief home economist of the Department of Agriculture. Such representatives of established organizations, led by Ellen McLean, then insisted at the conference that 'we don't have any need for another organization' while we have a Federation of Agriculture which as everyone knows is completely open to the leadership of women if they would just get involved... (The NFU delegates supported this position, though for somewhat different reasons.)

Indeed, we have no need of another state farm organization. We have no need of another organization which will misuse democratic forms to ensure that those who have power at the beginning of the process still have it at the end. We have no need of an organization which will exploit the genuine suffering of so many people to promote political changes which will favour their ambitions but leave the basic structures of injustice unaffected.

But we certainly do need to hear the strong voice of farm women: women who move beyond the stereotype to speak with their own clear passion about the land and the rural communities; about the values they strive to live by in their own lives; about their conviction that those same values must be the basis for our public policies in general and with regard to agriculture in particular.

In their small discussion groups, the delegates to this conference called for a "made-in-Canada" food policy. This demand never made it into the final communiqué. It was nevertheless the most appropriate response to the anguish expressed by so many.

- C.K.

