

# American Agriculture Does Wonders

A SLOGAN used on posters in South Africa reads: "Drought is a 6 letter word — HUNGER." That area very well may be the world's famine center right now, although millions may be hungry elsewhere.

Americans know about drouth but we have seldom, if ever, experienced hunger because no food was available.

"An English economist once said that it was America that had taught the world that it need not starve," says Henry Fairlie in an article in *The New Republic* (July 4, 1983). "The achievements of American agriculture are one of the wonders of the modern world."

Evidence of that truth may be seen along Oklahoma highways where huge round bales of wheat line fence rows to be used as livestock feed. American farmers have been able to grow more food than this country can consume or the rest of the world can buy.

The world needs the food we grow and ought to be receiving it. Our abundance really is not a surplus; it

is just a "plenty." Food needs supersede all other problems.

Americans are sympathetic to the world's hunger and billions of dollars have been spent to export our unneeded food supplies, as well as technology and equipment to help hungry nations grow more food.

The Marshall Plan, the Point Four program, the Green Revolution, the Peace Corps, various foreign aid programs have been in the parade of schemes instituted to move our supplies and expertise to friends and foes alike.

Nearly every country in the world at one time or another has received shipments of food under P.L.480, as well as research data and machinery that could help them become more nearly self-sufficient.

In addition, religious bodies and social organizations by the dozen have raised funds to help feed starving people. Their sympathy and contributions are commendable but hardly make a dent in global needs.

Why can't we get a solution? Three reasons surface: Population,

politics and poverty.

Growth in world population has slowed down some but many poor countries continue to raise more children than food.

Politics is a major barrier between food supplies and food needs. Recipient countries generally have weak governments and politicians hold power by controlling supplies.

Poverty is the major cause of world hunger, not scarcity of food, said experts at a World Food Economy Conference in Minneapolis last year. Needy countries can't pay for food because they have few resources or because they haven't developed the resources they have so they may be traded for food.

But poverty is more than money. International welfare has essentially the same dispiriting effect on nations that dependence on welfare has on individuals. They become permanently dependent.

Until we overcome political barriers and self-perpetuating poverty much of the world's growing population will remain hungry.