

## Exclusive IPS Interview:

# UN Program Has Millions Working For Food Instead Of Wages

*UNITED NATIONS, N.Y., May 22 (IPS) — The following interview was conducted earlier this week with a spokesman for the World Food Program, an agency of the United Nations.*

**IPS:** What is the World Food Program?

**World Food Program Spokesman:** The World Food Program is an agency of the United Nations; it was set up by the FAO (Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations) in 1963. The bulk of the program's activity is to provide food as wages for work projects around the world in the underdeveloped countries. So far, since 1963, the WFP has supplied more than \$2.2 billion in food, and currently has more than 2000 active or approved projects, employing millions of workers.

**IPS:** What kind of projects does the program fund with its food?

**WFP:** Almost all the projects are strictly agricultural or agriculturally-related. That is, we don't build any hospitals or anything like that. We either pay for strictly agricultural labor, or for projects such as digging irrigation wells, clearing forests, and so forth. Our emphasis is on using the existing labor, rather than buying machines. You see, the countries we are dealing with, such as India, have a tremendous problem of unemployment, so we make use of this vast resource. It's simple economics. We keep adding labor until the next worker consumes more than he produces. This depends on the project, of course.

**IPS:** It seems, from reviewing some of the programs projects, that they don't do well unless there is a large over-supply of labor available, much more than is needed for the project. Could this be because the workers are given an insufficient amount of food for them to continue working, so therefore they must be periodically replaced or recycled?

**WFP:** Look. We're only a service agency. We don't determine our total budget. We don't determine where the projects are. We have a limited budget and we're trying to help starving countries. Their problem is (leaning across table) hunger — hunger! And they couldn't buy any food, even if more was produced in the advanced countries, because (again leaning forward across the table) they have no money. Do you understand? It's a question of transferring resources from the rich countries to the poor countries, and that is always a battle.

**IPS:** Who makes policy for the program? Is the Club of Rome involved?

**WFP:** Club of Rome? Why bring them up? They're not part of the United Nations. They're just a private organization, a bunch of businessmen who put together policies, and then try to implement these policies, just like any other organization. Of course, when you think of who is actually in the Club of Rome, who are the experts employed by the FAO, and who are the big names in the universities, they frequently turn out to be the same people. But that's because they are the ex-

perts, and everyone calls on their services. Look at Jean Mayer (a fascist nutrition expert — ed.). He works for FAO heading up nutrition panels, runs the Nutrition Department at Harvard, and writes columns for the Daily News. Tinbergen, the Dutch economist, is now masterminding a huge revision of economic policy for the Club of Rome. He calls it "organic growth" — something between stagnation and real growth. Of course, this will have a strong impact on FAO's thinking, though for a hungry third world country, I'm sure it makes no sense at all.

**IPS:** Do you see any change taking place in the World Food Program's policies now?

**WFP:** First of all, as I said before, we don't make policies, we just follow out the policies. But as far as agricultural development in Third World areas, you have to understand that things have changed recently. In the Third World, at this point, almost all of the easily cultivated land — land where you don't need irrigation or fertilizer to get some kind of a crop — is under cultivation. Labor is cheap, so if you want to increase output you add more workers to the land, or you can expand into marginal areas, but unfortunately without tractors or fertilizer. This is where we are now. Along this line, there is a large fund being put together right now for food production, called the International Fund for Agricultural Development. The OPEC countries have already pledged \$400 million, and the advanced countries have brought that up to \$1 billion. This would dwarf our operations at the World Food Program.

**IPS:** Who is administering this fund? How will it work?

**WFP:** Well, John Hannah (a fascist nutrition expert, a favorite of the Club of Rome — ed.) who heads up the World Food Council, is in charge of arrangements to set up the fund. It should be completed at a meeting in Rome some time next month.

**IPS:** Where did the idea come from?

**WFP:** Well you know, the 1974 World Food Conference was held after (Secretary of State) Kissinger's proposal in the UN General Assembly, and that Conference proposed the setting up of the IFAD. Now the Conference's proposal specifically suggested that the fund use existing institutions to funnel its resources. I imagine this could include the World Food Program, the World Bank, and other such institutions.

**IPS:** You mean the IFAD could make loans available besides grants?

**WFP:** That's right.

**IPS:** Is this related to balance of payments problems?

**WFP:** Well, of course even if the loans were for food production, this would decrease food imports and help build up foreign reserves to pay back the loans.

**IPS:** Then, in other words, the countries would have more resources to pay off their international debt.

**WFP:** Sure, that's the idea, but that's not my area. I'm not responsible for that part of the deal.