

Farm bill should give help to hungry children abroad

By William Lambers

During World War II American soldiers witnessed the tragedy of children struggling to find food for survival. This experience had a lasting impact on many, including General Dwight Eisenhower.

Ike, in a series of appeals for the United Nations in 1948, emphasized that eliminating child hunger was crucial to world peace. Eisenhower believed that children who spend their young lives struggling to find sustenance, searching through "garbage heaps" as he put it, would become "wedded to the philosophy of force."

Today, Eisenhower's message is still very much relevant in a world where over 300 million children suffer from hunger.

The McGovern-Dole program, named after former senators Bob Dole and George McGovern, provides school lunches to children in impoverished nations. For many kids the school lunches are the only meal they receive the entire day.

The school lunches encourage parents to send their kids to school instead of keeping them home to work. Take-home rations are also a component of the initiative.

Charities such as C.A.R.E., Catholic Relief Services, Food for the Poor and the United Nations World Food Program carry out the school lunch programs.

Currently, McGovern-Dole reaches about 3 million children. But many school feeding proposals by the aforementioned charities are denied because there simply is not enough funding available.

Congress can increase fund-

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ing for McGovern-Dole in the 2007 Farm Bill. Ohio Senator Sherrod Brown, as a member of the Agricultural Committee, is a key player in making this happen.

The current controversy is whether or not the Senate will provide mandatory funding for McGovern-Dole, which will allow its annual budget to increase from \$100 million to \$300 million over the next five years.

The House already approved mandatory funding for McGovern-Dole in its version of the Farm Bill.

The applications of a strongly funded McGovern-Dole program are numerous.

More school lunches could be provided to children in Southern Sudan, a region recovering from decades of civil war. In 2006, the World Food Programme conducted a pilot school feeding program in North Darfur. One can imagine school lunch programs being an important part of peacekeeping and

reconstruction throughout Darfur.

We must not also forget about nations like the Central African Republic or Ethiopia, where the World Food Program has put in applications for school lunch funding via McGovern-Dole.

In Afghanistan, a country struggling to build a democracy and peace after years of conflict, school lunches are vital to reconstruction. The United States, with its allies, should ensure that every child in Afghanistan can obtain school lunches and take-home rations.

Any reconstruction plan for Iraq must also focus on ending child hunger and malnutrition, which has increased since the 2003 invasion.

As Eisenhower noted back in 1948, "If we are serious about saying that we want to travel the road to peace ... how can we attempt to say that we are traveling that road unless we do everything that lies within our power to create conditions in which peace may flourish. We must eliminate starvation - we must see that children are well nourished."

Today, we must ask ourselves if we are doing everything we can to promote peace. If we do not vigorously combat child hunger, then the answer to that question is no. Eliminating child hunger is of paramount importance in the quest for peace.

Expanding the McGovern-Dole Food for Education program is taking a major step in the fight against child hunger. The opportunity must not be missed by those in power today.

William Lambers is a local author and historian.