

Lester Brown: Food advances are over; it's time to kill people

by Marcia Merry Baker

The most prominent voice opposing the idea that food can, and should, be made abundant and available to all, is that of Lester Russell Brown, founder and president of the Worldwatch Institute, started in 1974 in Washington, D.C. Brown, often called "Dr. Doom," will be in attendance at the World Food Summit in Rome on Nov. 13-17. He has achieved global notoriety because, right from the start, Worldwatch was set up to run as a propaganda operation, whose backers intersect major media, financial and commodity interests, and world government agencies including the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and United Nations.

Worldwatch has scheduled its own Food Summit press seminar, in Rome on Nov. 12, on the theme, "Food Scarcity: A Threat to Economic and Political Instability."

Billed as a "research" institute, Worldwatch and its director pump out a stream of lies and misinformation, in service of the view that the world is overpopulated, relative to the Earth's resource base, and relative to mankind's technology potential, and that, therefore, according to what Brown calls the "population equation," people should die.

Brown has been spouting this message for over 30 years, for which he has received the epithets "Green Giant," "God's Scorekeeper," "Eco-Guru," etc. Since 1984, Worldwatch has issued Brown's annual pronouncements, called *State of the World*, which are published in all major languages, to promote the Worldwatch message. The reports are composed of pseudo-science to back up Worldwatch assertions.

At the end of this article, we provide some of the particulars from Brown's *curriculum vitae*, and background on the Worldwatch Institute, adapted from *EIR*, Dec. 8, 1995, "Food Control as a Strategic Weapon." The details show how Worldwatch and Brown's career are the creations of a food-control policy nexus including Rockefeller funding, and London-centered commodities interests, managed, in Brown's case, through the Minnesota-based Cargill/ADM cartel, by Orville Freeman.

But first, we report on the recent activities of Brown and Worldwatch, with regard to the World Food Summit. We also provide quoted examples, and refutations, of some of the most common lies and fallacies put out in Worldwatch propaganda.

Brown's 'tough choices'

On Nov. 12, at the Worldwatch briefing in Rome, Brown is scheduled to be the first speaker, on the topic, "The Global Food Prospect: Tough Choices—Facing the Challenge of Food Scarcity." Sandra Postel, senior fellow at Worldwatch, will speak on water scarcity; Gary Gardner, research associate, will address global cropland losses.

The Worldwatch Institute invitation to their Rome briefing states, "The Institute will present its new thesis that food scarcity is emerging as the defining issue of the year now beginning, much as ideological conflict was the defining issue in the historical era that recently ended. In its presentations, the institute will challenge the FAO [UN Food and Agriculture Organization] projections of surpluses and falling food prices, arguing that the future will be dominated by scarcity and rising food prices."

What does Brown recommend? Cut population! A Worldwatch press release of Nov. 1, "Facing Reality at the World Food Summit," concludes:

"The bottom line of this analysis is that the world's fishermen and farmers can no longer assume the principal responsibility for achieving an acceptable balance between food and people. This responsibility may now lie with family planners.

"There will be many documents coming from the summit, but the one that is most needed may not be forthcoming in the absence of a frank assessment of the changing food prospect. The one document that is needed is a letter from Jacques Diouf, the FAO director general, to his counterpart at the UN Population Fund, Nafis Sadik. It could be a short letter, one word would do: Help.

"If national leaders fail to recognize the new constraints on efforts to expand food production and the associated need to dramatically step up efforts to stabilize world population, then food scarcity could lead to political instability and social disintegration in many countries, diminishing the economic prospect everywhere."

Parson Malthus, Brown's hero

Lester Brown has promoted this same demand to cut population, for at least 30 years, with only the pseudo-scientific particulars changing from time to time. The young Brown's



Lester Brown in Washington, 1989. Known as "Dr. Doom," he will tell the World Food Summit in Rome that food scarcity is the defining issue of the coming year; that the future will be dominated by food scarcity and rising food prices. His solution? Cut population!

infatuation with the ideas of Parson Thomas Malthus, the English anti-population propagandist (1766-1834), on the payroll of the British East India Company, was one of his qualifications for Brown's getting funded in 1974 to run the Worldwatch Institute, by the financial backers of the zero-growth, anti-population movement, most notably the Rockefellerers.

In the foreword to his 1972 book, *Man and His Environment: Food*, co-authored with Gail Finsterbusch (New York: Harper and Row), Brown writes: "Thomas Malthus was probably the first to detect worldwide population pressure and to identify world population growth as a problem. When he published his essay on *The Principle of Population* in 1798, he defined the population problem primarily in terms of food supplies and the threat of famine. For almost 200 years men have perceived the population-food problem in these terms, asking, 'Can we produce enough food to feed anticipated human numbers?' . . . The relevant question is no longer, 'Can we produce enough food?' but 'What are the environmental consequences of attempting to do so?' "

The Worldwatch pitch for the Rome Food Summit is that *even attempting to feed people, is degrading to the environment, and must be stopped*. And secondly, current political disorder reflects food and ecological breakdown.

What about a new Green Revolution?

What, then, does Worldwatch say in response to the recent projections of agricultural scientists, for example, that break-

throughs in "super rice" and other crops can easily produce 25% more food, for billions more people, and give us a second Green Revolution? (See box.)

Worldwatch has all along opposed the very premise that more food for more people is desirable. Look at Brown's 1970 book on the original Green Revolution, called, *Seeds of Change: The Green Revolution and Development in the 1970s* (New York, London: Praeger, published for the Overseas Development Corp.).

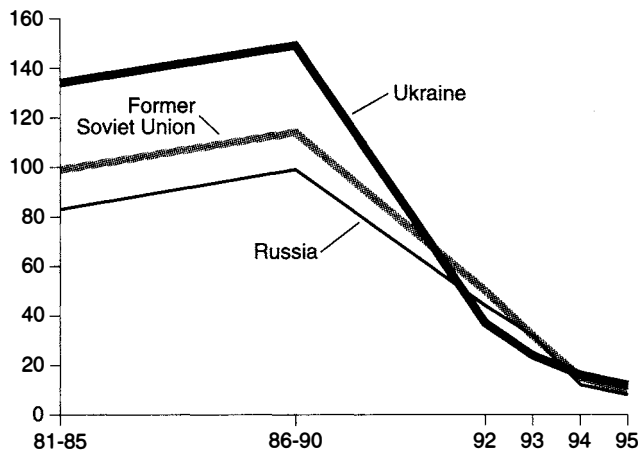
In this book, Brown reports on the dramatic gains in wheat and rice output from new "Green Revolution" varieties, but writes in his introduction: "The new seeds, of course, do not provide an ultimate solution to the food-population problem. The collision between population growth and food production has been averted only temporarily. But the new seeds have bought time in which to seek a breakthrough in contraception comparable to the breakthrough in plant breeding."

In the same book, Brown harps on other ills that he says arise from increasing agriculture output. He complains about "rising agricultural protectionism" on the part of nations that build up the output potential of their own farm sectors. He denounces Europe for "insisting on growing more and more of its own food." He denounces Japan for backing its own rice growers, saying, "Japan is perhaps the most flagrant violator of the laws of comparative advantage of any cereal-producing country." He calls for the World Bank, the IMF, and other international agencies to intervene to stop nations' attempts at food self-sufficiency, and demands global free trade.

FIGURE 1

Fertilizer applied in former Soviet Union

(kilograms per hectare)



And now, 26 years later, when so-called “free” trade has taken over, to the detriment of nations and to the advantage of the commodities cartels, Lester Brown is specializing in the argument that the “environment” will collapse if more food is produced.

Plain lies

What is his proof for this assertion? Lies, fallacies of composition, specious arguments, fear, and pessimism. Here are two examples; the first comes from Lester Brown’s Nov. 1 press release, “Facing Reality at the World Food Summit”; the second example comes from the most recent book, released in October, by Worldwatch Institute.

Lie: “In many countries, the amount of fertilizer being used is pressing against the physiological capacity of existing crop varieties to use additional fertilizer. As a result, fertilizer use has leveled off or declined in North America, Western Europe, the former Soviet Union, and Japan.”

What is the truth? Take the former Soviet Union. **Figure 1** shows the drastic decline in rate of fertilizer application per hectare in Russia, Ukraine, and the former Soviet Union, going from around 100 kilograms per hectare under the Soviet command economy in the 1980s, down to under 20 kilograms by 1995. Why? Because of the breakdown in the economy throughout the former Soviet Union. The economy is deteriorating, and being looted, to the point that ratios of all kinds of farm inputs—farm machines, fuel, chemicals, even land under the plow—are falling below the minimum. Russian potash fertilizer is being sold in the West; even tractors are being sold abroad at discount from the republics of the former Soviet Union.

Specious argument: The opening paragraph of Worldwatch’s press release of Oct. 26, titled “New Threats to Hu-

man Security: Study Documents Causes of ‘New World Disorder,’ ” states: “Rapid population growth, environmental degradation, and inequitable distribution of wealth are now provoking political strife in many countries, sometimes leading to social disintegration and armed conflict, according to *Fighting for Survival: Environmental Decline, Social Conflict, and the New Age of Insecurity*, the latest book from the Worldwatch Institute.” (The author is Michael Renner, Worldwatch senior researcher.)

What are the cited locations? Southern Sudan; Chiapas, in southern Mexico; the farmland regions of Brazil; the Euphrates Basin of Iraq, Syria, and Turkey; and Rwanda.

What is the truth? While it is accurate to say that economic deprivation contributes to social breakdown, the truth is that each of the Worldwatch-cited locations is the target of heavily funded foreign subversion operations, intended to create strife.

In southern Sudan and Rwanda, the direct hand of British intelligence is evident; e.g., John Garang, the southern Sudan rebel leader, has long been funded by U. S. and British sources, as a destabilization operation against Sudan. In Mexico and Brazil, foreign intelligence operations (French, British, World Bank, eco-terrorist, and narco-terrorist networks) are backing the Zapatistas in Chiapas, and the Landless Movement in Rio Grande do Sul, and elsewhere in Brazil. The Middle East is likewise in the throes of foreign-instigated violence, conducted by the enemies of the peace and economic development process. London itself is the home of many “Middle Eastern” groups responsible for bombings and other terrorist acts.

Did Worldwatch “researchers” somehow overlook these well-known facts? Hardly. The Worldwatch mission is to provide lies and coverup.

Their Oct. 26 “New World Disorder” press release, for example, states:

“As population pressures build, and local resources collapse, people often resort to ethnic, religious, or other group-based identities for protection. . . .

“In several countries, such problems have led to internal conflict. In Rwanda, population growth and limited economic opportunities put immense pressure on the land. Over-cultivation diminished soil fertility, cutting grain harvests by 32% between 1990 and 1993. The resulting economic desperation allowed Hutu extremists to play up ethnic tensions, culminating in a murderous 1994 rampage that led to hundreds of thousands of civilian deaths.

“In the Mexican state of Chiapas, land scarcity in the last decade has pushed growing numbers of peasants into the region’s Lacandón rain forest, provoking competition with ranchers and loggers—who already control the most productive land. Tree cover in the Lacandón declined from 90% in 1960 to 30% today, while soil fertility was simultaneously exhausted.

“As the local economic situation deteriorated, Zapatista

rebels—a force largely made up of indigenous peasants—staged an armed uprising in January 1994 to protest the government's decision to abandon a historic commitment to land reform. This led in turn to violent clashes with the Mexican army, and political instability that continues today."

Thus does Worldwatch "prove" that strife comes from the soil, resources are exhausted, and population should be cut.

Lester Brown's biography

Lester Russell Brown's entire career as a food and resources "expert" has been associated with the Worldwatch Institute, which he has headed since its creation in 1974. Brown was born in New Jersey in 1934, and was elevated into his role as an "agriculture authority" as a young man in Washington, D.C. in the 1960s.

Funding: The 1974 start-up grant for Worldwatch Institute was \$500,000 provided by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. The chief funders of Worldwatch over the succeeding years include the following foundations: Ford, Rockefeller, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur, Andrew W. Mellon, (Ted) Turner, William and Flora Hewlett, Charles Stewart Mott, Geraldine R. Dodge, Edward John Noble, W. Alton Jones, Curtis and Edith Munson, Frank Weeden, Energy, George Gund, Surdna, Public Welfare, and Edna McCon-

nell Clark.

Other Worldwatch funding agencies include the UN Environment Program, the UN Population Fund, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the Winthrop Rockefeller Trust, the Lynn R. and Karl E. Pickett Fund, the Robert R. McCormick Charitable Trust, and the Pew Charitable Trusts.

Associations: Brown is a member of the following groups: New York Council on Foreign Relations, Zero Population Growth, Common Cause, and World Future Society. He is a board member of the Institute of 21st Century Studies, the Population Reference Bureau; and an advisory council member of the Commission of National Institutions for the Environment. He is on the advisory committee of the Institute of International Economics, a consulting group run by C. Fred Bergsten of the Trilateral Commission, which acts in close association with the International Monetary Fund.

Education: BS from Rutgers University; masters degree in agriculture economics from the University of Maryland, 1959; masters degree in public administration from Harvard University, 1962.

Background: Brown worked at the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C. in 1959-69, starting out as an analyst for international agriculture in 1959-63, and otherwise working in the USDA Foreign Agriculture Service. During

New 'super rice' means 25% yield increase

On Oct. 15, two veteran scientists from the first Green Revolution, Dr. Gurdev Singh Khush and Dr. Henry Beachell, jointly received the 25th annual World Food Prize, in honor of their work on the 1960s "miracle rice," and on the more recent "super rice."

Dr. Beachell, an American, now 90 years old, began work at the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in the Philippines in 1963; in 1966, he developed "IR8," the stiff-strawed, semi-dwarf rice variety, that revolutionized world rice growing. In 1967, Gurdev Singh Khush, an Indian, now 61 years old, came to the IRRI, collaborated on disseminating IRRI "miracle rice," and on developing "super rice."

In their remarks at the awards ceremony in Des Moines, Iowa, the researchers reported on the 25% increase possible in per-hectare rice yields by the year 2000.

Dr. Singh Khush said that the new rice is the basis for providing increased food for millions more people. He reported, "In 1988, IRRI scientists conceptualized a 'new plant type' which will produce 20-25% higher yield. The breeding program to develop such plants was initiated in

1989 and, within five years, the new plant type became a reality."

He then provided the per-hectare specifics on biomass potential, and also gave a short review of the pre-Green Revolution biomass per hectare, up through the most recent advances in increasing edible biomass per hectare.

"The pre-Green Revolution rice varieties produce a biomass (grains, stems, and leaves) of 12 tons/hectare, and 30% of that are grains, and the rest straw. Thus, their maximum yield is about 4 tons/hectare. Modern high-yielding varieties, when properly fertilized, can produce 18-20 tons of biomass, and 50% of that is grain. So they can produce 9-10 tons/hectare. We reasoned that the rice varieties of the future must produce a biomass of 21 tons, of which 60% should be grain. They would then produce 12.0 to 12.5 tons of rice per hectare. Modern high-yielding varieties have 25-27 tillers [grain stalks], of which only 15-16 produce panicles or ears, each with about 100 grains. Remaining tillers remain unproductive. On the other hand, the new plant type, dubbed 'super rice' by some, has only 8-10 tillers, all of which produce panicles, each with more than 200 grains. It has sturdy, lodging-resistant stems. We are now incorporating genes for disease and insect resistance into the new plant type lines. When finally ready, by the turn of the century, they should outyield existing high-yielding varieties by 20-25%."—*Marcia Merry Baker*

this period, Brown was groomed for service by Agriculture Secretary Orville L. Freeman.

Freeman was in turn beholden—as he is up to the present day—to the London-centered financial and food commodities interests operating out of Minnesota, Freeman’s home state. Freeman started out as a lawyer in 1947, and was elected governor in 1955. He was part of the Hubert Humphrey political machine, with all its connections to organized crime and international free trade. Freeman has served as chairman of the Worldwatch Institute’s board of directors throughout its 20-year existence, and serves on many similar boards, for example, the Club of Rome-linked World Future Society. The World Future Society is one of the biggest proponents of the insane “Third Wave” theory, peddled by Alvin Toffler and Newt Gingrich, that society has gone into a post-industrial epoch.

In 1964-66, Brown was given the role of adviser on foreign agricultural policy to Agriculture Secretary Freeman. Then, after another Freeman appointment, Brown served as administrator of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s International Development Service in 1966-69. Brown went on to help found and work with the Overseas Development Council (ODC), started in 1969, with the backing of many private corporations, foundations, and individuals; Freeman was on the board, James P. Grant was president, and Theodore Hesburgh was chairman of the board. Brown calls this period with the ODC (1969-74) “the beginning of 26 rewarding years spent on Massachusetts Avenue’s ‘think-tank row.’”

Worldwatch chroniclers like to cite a specific discussion that Brown had with William Dietel, vice-president of the Rockefellers Brothers Fund, at the Aspen Institute in Aspen, Colorado, in the summer of 1973, as the point of origin of the founding of Worldwatch. They cite the men’s “shared common interests in forming a small research institute to do integrated study and analysis of global issues,” specifically environmental and environmentally related issues.

During the early 1970s, Brown was active in many locations. He was a faculty member at the Salzburg Seminar in American Studies, summers 1971 and 1974; guest scholar, Aspen Institute, summers 1972-74. (He was MacArthur Foundation fellow in 1986.)

These Aspen Institute links are important. Aspen was founded by Robert Maynard Hutchins, the longtime chancellor of the University of Chicago, who was the leading American ally of the late Lord Bertrand Russell, the international socialist who advocated the elimination of science and the systematic elimination of the darker-skinned races. To this day, Aspen is one of the leading Malthusian snake pits in the world, peddling the idea of “food as a weapon.”

Awards: 1965 USDA Superior Service award; 1965 Arthur S. Flemming award, for one of ten outstanding young men in federal government; 1981 A.H. Boerma award of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization; 1982 National Wildlife Federation Special Conservation award; 1985

Lorax award of Global Tomorrow Coalition (the group associated with the Malthusian Donald Lesh and the Club of Rome); 1986 MacArthur Foundation “Genius” fellowship award; 1989 World Wide Fund for Nature International award; 1989 UN Environment Prize; 1991 American Humanist Association, “Humanist of the Year”; 1991 Pro Mundo Habitabili award of King Carl XVI Gustav of Sweden.

Markers: During the 1960s, Brown cultivated the reputation for being the “whiz kid” who could connect the issues of population growth rates with food availability. Orville Freeman and other mentors of Brown realized, that in Brown, they had a pliable personality who could be counted upon to make the issue of population limitation the “big issue” for agriculture.

For example, Brown counts among his greatest accomplishments, working with Freeman in the 1960s, to persuade the U.S. government to insist upon fundamental changes in India’s food policy, as a condition for food shipments from United States.

Brown’s claim to fame in economics? His specialty is to assemble and cite any incident or statistics, from which he can adduce whatever his backers want to hear. An early example, the chroniclers report, dates from when Brown made a tour to India in the 1960s. He showed his self-professed “knack for putting together a lot of bits and pieces of information no self-respecting State Department analyst would use,” and he produced arguments and “predictions” of an imminent countrywide drought and threat to the food supply, based on anecdotal reports, such as one from a duck hunter whose favorite lake had dried up.

Author: Publications include:

1963 “Man, Land and Food: Looking Ahead at World Food Needs” (USDA-FAS study, tying global agriculture forecasts to population growth forecasts)

1965 *Increasing World Food Output*

1970 *Seeds of Change; the Green Revolution and Development in the 1970s*

1972 *World Without Borders*

1974 *In the Human Interest*

1974 *By Bread Alone*, with Erik P. Eckholm, for the Overseas Development Council

1978 *The Twenty-Ninth Day: Accommodating Human Needs and Numbers to the World’s Resources*

1981 *Building a Sustainable Society*

1991 *Saving the Planet; How to Shape an Environmentally Sustainable Global Economy*

1994 *Full House: Reassessing the Earth’s Population Carrying Capacity*

1995 *Who Will Feed China? Wake-Up Call for a Small Planet*

Editor: 1988-, *WorldWatch* magazine; co-editor, 1991, *Saving the Planet: How to Shape an Environmentally Sustainable Global Economy*; 1984-, *State of the World* annual reports, issued in 26 languages.