

Information on

THE MEDFORD DECLARATION TO END HUNGER IN THE U.S.

Origin

In November, 1989, twenty-three experts convened at the Rockefeller Foundation Conference Center in Bellagio, Italy to address the problem of world hunger. They produced The Bellagio Declaration, a statement which spells out ways to cut world hunger in half by the year 2000. In 1990, at the Brown University World Hunger Conference, it was suggested that U.S. organizations concerned with domestic hunger need the equivalent of a "domestic Bellagio." A drafting committee was convened at Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts, and has produced The Medford Declaration to End Hunger in the U.S.

Purpose

Domestic hunger is a serious problem, but it is a problem this nation can solve. In the 1970s the nation was mobilized on a bipartisan basis to address hunger, and programs created and expanded greatly reduced this menacing problem. But the nation, and its leaders, let hunger return as a widespread phenomenon. We have the knowledge and programs to end hunger in a matter of months. The Medford Declaration suggests 1995 as a target, however, because authorization of major nutrition programs will coincide with this date. Moreover, three years will allow for mobilization of the country to reach this timely goal.

Despite a decade of domestic hunger studies, there is as yet no single document spelling out how to end hunger in the U.S., both in the short- and long-term, and which is a document produced by no one organization but which is "owned" by all. The idea behind The Medford Declaration is to have a bipartisan document which appeals to the American Public, which describes the economic costs and simple unacceptability of domestic hunger, and how this problem can be ended. Much as The Bellagio Declaration is now used by U.N. agencies and organizations in international development, it is envisioned that The Medford Declaration will be a seminal document which sets the standard for ending domestic hunger.

Use

The Medford Declaration can become the hunger-equivalent of the Surgeon General's goals on health; a standard by which we as a nation express our goal, commitment and intention to end this man-made problem. It can draw considerable press and public attention, helping to raise public awareness and promote debate and discussion about hunger in the nation. It is envisioned that Congressional hearings will be held to address issues and goals raised in The Medford Declaration. Organizations on both the national and local levels can use the Declaration in their own work, enabling them to focus on hunger from their own perspectives while being part of a common national agenda. There will be no key sponsors; all signatories will have equal standing and prominence in keeping with the desire that The Medford Declaration be a statement representing a broad spectrum of individuals and organizations. An April release date for the Declaration is planned, followed by Congressional hearings.

Process and Timetable

The Medford Declaration to End Hunger in the U.S. was drafted over a period of several months by a committee of national hunger organizations (World Hunger Year, Food Research and Action Center, and the Center on Hunger, Poverty and Nutrition Policy at Tufts). It was reviewed by foundation presidents, corporate chairpersons, community leaders, and a variety of others, and revised through six drafts based on their comments.

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THE MEDFORD DECLARATION TO END HUNGER IN THE U.S.

We can end hunger in America, and we can end it now.

Three decades ago a new President challenged our nation with two goals: to reach the moon and to end domestic hunger. We have reached only one of these goals. It is time to achieve the other.

Hunger has no place in the new world tomorrow brings. It is a form of economic suicide. Hunger is also inconsistent with our conscience. If anything is un-American, it is hunger.

We believe Americans have reached a consensus on ending hunger. We come to this consensus from many points of view.

Many of us are moved by the belief that the United States is losing its economic leadership, and that we must invest more in our children and families to insure national productivity in a more competitive world. Others are moved by enlightened self-interest, pointing out that we either pay now or pay later for preventable problems.

Still other citizens address domestic hunger out of strong moral or religious convictions. And many in the fields of education and health are moved by the crippling impact of hunger on the health and learning capacity of our children.

From many walks of life, we are one people -- a people who agree that we can eradicate hunger in our country. A people who believe we must do so.

Abolishing hunger at home will require two steps.

In the short term we must use existing channels to see that food is available to the hungry on an adequate and consistent basis. If we fully utilize existing public programs -- in conjunction with the heroic efforts of voluntary food providers in local communities -- we can end hunger very soon.

But we must move as a nation to end the causes of hunger as well. Many things can be done to increase the purchasing power of American households, and to fulfill the desire for independence and self-reliance which so characterizes our people.

We can achieve this two-step goal before the start of the new century.

We can begin with children...and we can virtually eliminate domestic hunger by 1995.

Programs exist to insure that all Americans have enough to eat by 1995. Within months we can meet emergency needs by moving surplus foodstuffs into the communities

of the nation as quickly as we ship goods to feed our military personnel overseas. Within two years we can fully use existing federal food programs to prevent hunger.

We must begin with children. We can reach every needy child with the school lunch and breakfast program. We can start with the six million poor youngsters who often begin their school day with no food. We can fully use the highly effective WIC program to help insure that poor mothers do not give birth to undernourished babies -- protecting four million more youngsters who presently are at risk.

We can expand the benefits of food stamps which help unemployed households make it through economically difficult times. And we can insure that no elderly citizen goes without the nutrients provided by Meals on Wheels and congregate feeding.

These steps alone can virtually wipe out domestic hunger by mid-decade.

We can achieve economic self-reliance for most American households by the year 2000.

Promoting adequate purchasing power is the way to achieve the goal of a hunger-free United States. This nation will have defeated chronic hunger when its people achieve "food security" -- regular access to an adequate diet through normal means.

A variety of steps can be taken this decade to accomplish this end: market-based employment and training programs to build skills and expand jobs; making sure child care is available so parents can work; expanding concepts such as earned income tax credits and children's allowances so that the tax system strengthens families. The goal is to increase the purchasing power of employed heads-of-households so that work raises families out of poverty.

The current window of world peace now gives us the opportunity to abolish domestic hunger. We can increase the competitiveness of our work force and protect the vital energies of our young. And we can assist emerging democracies of the world with pride because all Americans will enjoy the most basic fruit of our own democracy -- freedom and family security.

We stand at a special moment in history. Perhaps for the first time, our desire to end hunger is converging with the opportunity to do so. We have moved from ability to consensus. We now need the political leadership to achieve the long-held goal of an America free of hunger.

**Significance of The Medford Declaration to
End Hunger in the U.S.**

- ** Endorsed by **more American leaders** than any document in history (2,500 leaders, and over 1,000 organizations)
- ** National leaders, and from **every state** in the U.S.
- ** Leaders represent organizations of **100 million Americans**
- ** First time the nation has a widely-supported way to end hunger, and timetable for doing so-- **1995**
- ** Support from across **all** political constituencies:

Corporate chairs
 Union presidents
 University presidents
 Philanthropic heads
 Major medical leaders
 National religious heads
 Environmental groups

Hollywood artists
 Mayors and Governors
 Members of Congress
 Women/Minority leaders
 Child advocates
 National service groups
 UNICEF, CARE, Oxfam, Amnesty

THE MEDFORD DECLARATION TO END HUNGER IN THE U.S.

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