Hungry Peoples—Challenge to Peace-makers — Part 1

By Neal Potter

Biographical

Neal Potter. Education—University of Minnesota and the University of Chicago in the field of economics and political science. *Professional Career*—1949 served as assistant to Dr. Compton, former President of Washington State College, while he served on the Economic Committee of the UN General Assembly, and participated in the launching of the "Point 4" program of technical aid to backward countries; formerly Northwest Field Director for the United World Federalists; currently Chairman of the United World Federalists of Washington, D. C.; currently employed as a researcher in the problems dealing with natural resources.

Neal Potter

+ + +

The challenge to peace-makers is complex, but of vital importance. The hungry peoples constitute a majority of the world's population; they occupy strategic areas bordering the Soviet and China, as well as at crossroads of the world's commerce; they possess most of the world's reserves of bauxite (aluminum), tin, copper, and most important, three-fourths of the world's petroleum.

Clearly wrong is the frequent simplification that hunger leads to desperation and thus to war. World War II was started by Japan and Germany, the richest nations on their respective continents, not by the poorest, like Greece and China.

The challenge is to our religion, which calls on us to help those in need. And it is a challenge to our way of life, for if

free institutions cannot solve the problems of starvation and misery, Communist institutions will be tried in their place. The race for economic advancement now going on between India and Red China is of the utmost importance to us: For if China wins the race, India is likely to go Communist, and most of Asia would follow suit. A repetition of the disaster of China's loss to the free world is something which might well make it impossible for freedom to survive in our own country.

Solving the problem of hunger is as complex as all the things that make the social and economic system operate. It is not just a matter of sending food, for the U.S. does not have enough to meet the whole problem; the underdeveloped nations themselves can, taken together, produce more added food than we can send them. Atomic energy is not the answer, because some nations (the Middle East) already have cheap and abundant energy sources. Technical aid ("know-how") is not enough: Every nation has enough money to hire experts (and has hired them). Changed social attitudes toward law and order, honesty, innovations, and sacred cows are necessary; capital equipment and land improvement are also required. Money alone is not enough: Some of the Mideast nations have large annual receipts from selling oil. Freedom from colonialism is not enough: Newly freed countries are not quickly solving their economic problems; most of South America has been free for a century.

Nevertheless, we must help provide some answers, for our sake as well as theirs.

(1) First, it seems necessary to spend more money rather than less. It is tragic that the reviews of foreign aid that have gone on in the public discussions of the past year have centered on how to save money, for the amounts being spent are about 1 per cent of our national income. The vital question that should concern anyone reviewing the program is how to make foreign aid more effective, for on this seems to depend the survival of our nation as well as our way of life.

Economic aid should be expanded more than military aid, for it has been only hundreds of millions while military grants have run to billions. Not only technical aid is needed, but funds for capital equipment—irrigation dams, roads, factories, etc.