

Moral obligation?

Rich nations must give aid

Many of us at the Foreign Student Organization were shocked and hurt by Charles Knechtel's letter, "Let's forget it" (ODE, Feb. 5). The letter, however, brings up a number of important issues. It is rather difficult to perceive how students studying in universities can be so insensitive to the plight of Ethiopia, and the pain, hunger, and agony in the world.

There must be some fundamental problem with the education system that allows such insensitivities to propagate. Just cramming one's books and getting good grades doesn't make one's education any better. First and foremost

Commentary

we are human, and the criteria for being one is to be sensitive to others' needs. Is there really much of a difference between the animals in the jungle and us so-called humans? We have created a world of barbarians, where injustice and inequalities are met with blind eyes. If this is progress, then we are better off without it.

Most Americans don't give a damn about the world as long as they get their bread and butter on their table, regardless of how many people died and suffered to get them their fair share. If people are dying in Chile, or being exploited in South Africa by the big corporations — what is it to them? The pinch is felt only when the tax is increased on their side of the shore.

The two superpowers, the Soviet Union and the United States, are too worried about capitalism and communism. Have they ever stopped to think whether the majority of the world's people can even spell "communism" or "capitalism," far from applying these ideologies to their lives? The question is food and not ideology! First, let everyone have their basic human needs met before the two powers fight for spheres of influence. The reason the "North" is rich and the "South" is poor is because the Third World has been picked dry for centuries by the developed nations. This indiscriminate exploitation continues even today. It is the moral obligation of the richer countries to help the poorer. Also, as part of

the human family, the developed nations should be more understanding and benevolent. This is a reciprocal world and there is only one way: you help them — they'll help you.

If one tends to reject the above arguments, it is for the safety of the richer nations that they should take care of the poor nations, before the poor people of the Third World get too discontented and start walking over the borders as refugees. Can you visualize a scene where billions of people are walking across international boundaries? This is not improbable. Just a few years ago, 15 million Bangladeshis wanted to cross over to India and Pakistan (remember, China and India alone have over a billion and a half people). What are the rich countries going to do — "nuke" these poor people, or shoot them? The "poor" have nothing to lose — they have already lost everything. People are dying day in and day out without any food. It is the "rich" who have a lot to lose.

I am not writing this to offend anyone, but to sincerely raise certain essential issues. Also, there are a lot of genuinely concerned people and organizations who are sincerely interested in helping the poor and eradicating the disparities. But often their voices have been drowned by those in positions of power who don't care. It is high time we were allowed to hear them. One also realizes the fact that the first world and the Third World have been fighting each other for too long — it is time for both to sit down and reconcile their differences. We should not forget the past, but it is useless to drag it around all the time. It is time for us to be united as a force for the good of all humanity.

From February 25 through March 2, African Relief Week will be held by the International Student Association in conjunction with the Foreign Student Organization. People interested in helping should contact the I.S.A. or the F.S.O. office. Together we can do something to help.

Sundaram Tagore
Asst. Director,
Foreign Student Organization

letter

Thank you

I would like to thank Mr. Powell for correcting my use of the word "impact" (ODE, Feb. 5). His concern for the proper usage of the English language is

admirable. We should be grateful that Mr. Powell is willing to express his outrage when our language is abused.

Possibly, we could make a deal. I will give you free skiing

lessons at Willamette Pass if you will edit my letters before they get to the editorial page. Please give me a call, my number is in the phone book.

Jim Simasko
Economics

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