



Winter 1977

By Bread Alone

Gerald Thomas

Recommended Citation

Gerald Thomas, *By Bread Alone*, 17 Nat. Resources J. 152 (1977).
Available at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nrj/vol17/iss1/12>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Law Journals at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Natural Resources Journal by an authorized editor of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact amywinter@unm.edu, lsloane@salud.unm.edu, sarahrk@unm.edu.

BY BREAD ALONE

by LESTER R. BROWN with ERIK P. ECKHOLM
New York: Praeger Publishers. 1974. Pp. 272. \$3.95 S.C.

Distributed at no cost to participants at the World Food Conference in Rome, Italy, Brown and Eckholm's *By Bread Alone* served as a very valuable reference document. The book confirmed most of the statements made in the FAO background papers concerning the serious nature of the food shortages in 1974 with predictions of more world hunger to come in the decades ahead.

Working with the Overseas Development Council, Lester Brown has become one of the world's leading authorities on the world food situation. Statistics in this latest book are discussed in proper perspective with emphasis on the core problem—*irresponsible population growth and rising affluence*. These two population factors are causing global demands for food of unprecedented dimensions.

After a brief and hard-hitting overview of the world food problem, the authors discuss our dependence on four basic and limiting resources—land, water, energy and fertilizer. The “Green Revolution” is cited as an example of progress to “buy time” but not a solution to the problem. Further development of fisheries and non-conventional food sources show some promise but will not have major impact on world food supplies in the near term.

A simultaneous effort is needed to simplify diets among the more affluent and to reduce waste. The world's principal unrealized potential for expanding food production is now concentrated in the developing countries. However, even the authors of this book do not have any magic formula for moving these countries into a position of food security. Agricultural development in these poor nations involves complex social, political and economic changes. The pattern followed by the “developed” nations—with heavy emphasis on mechanization and high energy subsidies—may not apply to the “Fourth World”—a group of about 40 countries defined by Brown and Eckholm as countries in which average per capita income is still less than \$150 per year.

Certainly, *By Bread Alone* presents another challenge to all peoples to “Reorder Priorities,” to redefine our “moral” obligations to a potentially hungry world, to study more seriously the ecological implications of our actions, and to re-examine our attitudes toward population growth in a world with finite natural resources. This book is highly recommended reading for both the lay public and serious students concerned about world food supplies.

GERALD W. THOMAS*

*President, New Mexico State University.