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Political Science

Exodus from Hunger: We Are Called to Change the Politics of Hunger
David Beckman
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The United States has a higher rate of poverty than any other country except Mexico. So says the Luxembourg Income Study (a data bank and research institute), which sets the poverty line in twenty-one high-income nations at half of that country's median income. Further, "government spending on social programs to reduce poverty is also lower in the United States than in all other countries except Mexico," argues David Beckman.

Beckman is an ordained Lutheran minister and President of Bread for the World, a Christian-based collective that seeks changes in public policy to reduce hunger and poverty. He has written *Exodus from Hunger* as a how-to manual for political action to reduce poverty and hunger in this country and throughout the world. He cites disturbing US statistics: 22.5% of children live in a food-insecure household as of December 2008; while most people who are food-insecure (49 million in total) are white, more than 25% of African-Americans and Hispanics live in food-insecure households. "A common pattern among food-insecure households is that the family runs out of food before the end of the month," the author writes.

According to Beckman, the amount needed to dramatically reduce hunger in the United States is also startling. "We know from official data that the extra groceries needed to make all families food-secure would cost roughly $34 billion a year." Yet, the United States spent $190 billion in 2008 on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; and the Bush tax cuts are costing us about $150 billion a year.

Overall, Beckman is optimistic. He gives several examples of countries, as different as Mozambique and Great Britain, which have reduced poverty and hunger. Key to their success, among other factors, was a serious, bi-partisan national commitment. Beckman also notes that between 2000 and 2009, the United States increased federal spending on food for poor people from $33 billion to $80 billion, and he gives specific instructions on how to lobby Congress for further improvements in social programs.

Central to Beckman's message is the working of God through history and he supports this position with appropriate Bible references. "Based on what the Bible says about people in need, doing our part to overcome hunger and poverty is crucial to religious integrity."

Whether you are a believer, as Beckman is, or not, *Exodus from Hunger* is a compelling call to action and service. Beckman makes the case well that the need is great but so are the resources. What is lacking is the will.

John Michael Senger