

Wade for spending lavishly on roads and five-star hotels for an Islamic summit meeting last month while many people are unable to afford rice or fish.

"Why are these riots happening?" asked Arif Husain, senior food security analyst at the World Food Program, which has issued urgent appeals for donations. "The human instinct is to survive, and people are going to do no matter what to survive. And if you're hungry you get angry quicker."

Leaders who ignore the rage do so at their own risk. President René Préval of Haiti appeared to taunt the populace as the chorus of complaints about *la vie chère*—the expensive life—grew. He said if Haitians could afford cellphones, which many do carry, they should be able to feed their families. "If there is a protest against the rising prices," he said, "come get me at the palace and I will demonstrate with you."

When they came, filled with rage and by the thousands, he huddled inside and his presidential guards, with United Nations peacekeeping troops, rebuffed them. Within days, opposition lawmakers had voted out Mr. Préval's prime minister, Jacques-Édouard Alexis, forcing him to reconstitute his government. Fragile in even the best of times, Haiti's population and politics are now both simmering.

"Why were we surprised?" asked Patrick Èlie, a Haitian political activist who followed the food riots in Africa earlier in the year and feared they might come to Haiti. "When something is coming your way all the way from Burkina Faso you should see it coming. What we had was like a can of gasoline that the government left for someone to light a match to it."

#### DWINDLING MENUS

The rising prices are altering menus, and not for the better. In India, people are scrimping on milk for their children. Daily bowls of dal are getting thinner, as a bag of lentils is stretched across a few more meals.

Maninder Chand, an auto-rickshaw driver in New Delhi, said his family had given up eating meat altogether for the last several weeks.

Another rickshaw driver, Ravinder Kumar Gupta, said his wife had stopped seasoning their daily lentils, their chief source of protein, with the usual onion and spices because the price of cooking oil was now out of reach. These days, they eat bowls of watery, tasteless dal, seasoned only with salt.

Down Cairo's Hafziyah Street, peddlers selling food from behind wood carts bark out their prices. But few customers can afford their fish or chicken, which bake in the hot sun. Food prices have doubled in two months.

Ahmed Abul Gheit, 25, sat on a cheap, stained wooden chair by his own pile of rotting tomatoes. "We can't even find food," he said, looking over at his friend Sobhy Abdullah, 50. Then raising his hands toward the sky, as if in prayer, he said, "May God take the guy I have in mind."

Mr. Abdullah nodded, knowing full well that the "guy" was President Hosni Mubarak.

The government's ability to address the crisis is limited, however. It already spends more on subsidies, including gasoline and bread, than on education and health combined.

"If all the people rise, then the government will resolve this," said Raisa Fikry, 50, whose husband receives a pension equal to about \$83 a month, as she shopped for vegetables. "But everyone has to rise together. People get scared. But we will all have to rise together."

It is the kind of talk that has prompted the government to treat its economic woes as a

security threat, dispatching riot forces with a strict warning that anyone who takes to the streets will be dealt with harshly.

Niger does not need to be reminded that hungry citizens overthrow governments. The country's first postcolonial president, Hamani Diori, was toppled amid allegations of rampant corruption in 1974 as millions starved during a drought.

More recently, in 2005, it was mass protests in Niamey, the Nigerien capital, that made the government sit up and take notice of that year's food crisis, which was caused by a complex mix of poor rains, locust infestation and market manipulation by traders.

"As a result of that experience the government created a cabinet-level ministry to deal with the high cost of living," said Moustapha Kadi, an activist who helped organize marches in 2005. "So when prices went up this year the government acted quickly to remove tariffs on rice, which everyone eats. That quick action has kept people from taking to the streets."

#### THE POOR EAT MUD

In Haiti, where three-quarters of the population earns less than \$2 a day and one in five children is chronically malnourished, the one business booming amid all the gloom is the selling of patties made of mud, oil and sugar, typically consumed only by the most destitute.

"It's salty and it has butter and you don't know you're eating dirt," said Olwich Louis Jeune, 24, who has taken to eating them more often in recent months. "It makes your stomach quiet down."

But the grumbling in Haiti these days is no longer confined to the stomach. It is now spray-painted on walls of the capital and shouted by demonstrators.

In recent days, Mr. Préval has patched together a response, using international aid money and price reductions by importers to cut the price of a sack of rice by about 15 percent. He has also trimmed the salaries of some top officials. But those are considered temporary measures.

Real solutions will take years. Haiti, its agriculture industry in shambles, needs to better feed itself. Outside investment is the key, although that requires stability, not the sort of widespread looting and violence that the Haitian food riots have fostered.

Meanwhile, most of the poorest of the poor suffer silently, too weak for activism or too busy raising the next generation of hungry. In the sprawling slum of Haiti's Cité Soleil, Placide Simone, 29, offered one of her five offspring to a stranger. "Take one," she said, cradling a listless baby and motioning toward four rail-thin toddlers, none of whom had eaten that day. "You pick. Just feed them."

[From the Irish Times, Apr. 22, 2008]

#### CLIMATE CHANGE DEVASTATION GIVES FOOD FOR THOUGHT ON EARTH DAY

(By Fr. Seán McDonagh)

Tuesday, April 22nd, is Earth Day. Unfortunately, there is very little to celebrate this year, as the devastation of the Earth is increasing at an extraordinary rate and, in many countries, the poor are feeling the pain of hunger and starvation.

The major culprit this year is climate change. Droughts in various parts of the world, especially Australia, have cut food supplies and the rush to grow biofuels leaves less land on which to grow food. As a result food prices have jumped dramatically during the year. Maize is up 31 per cent, rice has increased by 74 per cent, soya is up 87 per cent, and wheat is now 130 per cent dearer than it was last year.

In recent years, concerns about global warming and the end of the oil era convinced

many people that growing energy crops might be a good idea. In the U.S. the production of ethanol from plant matter increased by a factor of five in the past decade. Policy decisions taken this year will lead to a further five-fold increase. Europe is also boosting biofuel production and attempting to source it from various parts of the world.

The speed at which these changes are taking place can be seen from a glance at investment in biofuels. In 1995 it was a mere \$5 billion. A decade later it had jumped to \$38 billion, and is expected to top \$100 billion (€63 billion) by 2010.

Sorry to say the biofuel boom is a classic example of the paradox of conscious purpose. This means that we often achieve the very opposite result to the one we intended. In both southeast Asia and South America, growing biofuel crops has led to massive destruction of the rainforest. In Brazil, for example, more than 302,514 hectares were destroyed in the second half of 2007. One of the main reasons for this is the pressure to grow more soya.

In Malaysia and Indonesia producing biofuels from palm oil will increase the amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere, because the preferred way of clearing the forest is by burning it. This final destruction of the forest will lead to the extinction of countless species of plant, animal, reptile and bird life.

Global food supplies are also at a very low ebb. The last time the U.S.'s grain silos were so empty was in the early 1970s when President Richard Nixon sold the wheat surplus to the USSR because crop failures there were leading to starvation. The U.S. recently told the World Food Programme to expect a 40 per cent increase in the price of food in 2008.

Less food and dearer food has led to riots around the world. In Morocco, 34 people were arrested in January 2008 for taking part in riots over food prices. The situation in Egypt is worse. In a 12-month period up to March 2008, the price of cereals and bread had increased in Egypt by 48.1 per cent, according to Egypt's Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics. The price of cooking oil rose by 45.2 per cent. Because of these increases, the Egyptian government has relaxed the rules on who is eligible for food aid. This has led to tensions and, if the situation continues, could destabilise the government.

The same is true in Pakistan. Meanwhile, at least four people were killed and 20 wounded when demonstrations against rising food prices turned into riots in southern Haiti.

My colleagues in the Philippines tell me that both the price of rice and insecure supplies of the cereal could do much more to destabilise the government of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo than coup plotters or even charges of gross corruption. All in all there is little to celebrate on Earth Day, 2008.

Mr. DURBIN. I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

#### GLOBAL YOUTH SERVICE DAY

Mrs. DOLE. Madam President, I rise today in support of the 20th Annual Global Youth Service Day. This event, the largest service event in the world, celebrates the contributions of young people to better their community, country and world through voluntarism. The day also celebrates contributions by the community, including the

public, private, and nonprofit sectors, to empower young people.

Like the youth who participate in the Global Youth Service Day, I gravitated towards public service at a young age. After graduating from law school, I worked for the Department of Health, Education and Welfare on the rights and potential contributions of disabled Americans. We all have a contribution to make, and for me, the greatest joy in life has come from public service, which has enabled me to touch countless lives. My mother, Mary Hanford, who passed away just shy of 103 years old, taught me at a very young age the importance of giving back to your community and helping those around you. She taught me that the best thing you can leave behind is not found on a résumé or in a bank account; it is found in your character, making a difference, a positive difference, the lives of others.

During Global Youth Service Day, millions of young people across the globe will participate in thousands of community improvement projects. Although we commemorate this event only once a year, Global Youth Service Day is a celebration of contributions made every day by dedicated young people who desire to change the world one good deed at a time, and by the communities that empower them to do so. True service is not giving 1 day or even 1 week a year; it is truly a way of life.

The projects carried out for Global Youth Service Day focus on issues ranging from increasing literacy to protecting the environment and ending hunger. One can see the diversity of the projects and the dedication of the participants by looking at those carried out in my home state of North Carolina during last year's Global Youth Service Day. One such project, the Pfeiffer University Relay for Life, was held a few miles from my hometown of Salisbury. This 24-hour relay was held to support cancer research and to raise awareness. Another project, in Charlotte, involved a group doing their own part to protect the environment by picking up litter and cleaning a creek in their neighborhood.

Looking back over the years, my belief is it won't be the cars you drove or the titles you held or the awards you were given that will matter. No, it is character, integrity, a caring heart and compassionate concern and love for your fellow man that will count for so much more. So let me assure you, that just one individual, one person like those who participate in this important day, can make a world of difference . . . even, I might say, a different world. Volunteers are a powerful force, and our future depends on people like these youth, who will motivate and challenge others and make that positive difference.

No one is ever too young or too old to be involved in shaping our world. I encourage all youth to be inspired on this day to use their talents to find ways to

make a positive difference in the lives of others. I am proud to be an original cosponsor of legislation designating April 25, 2008, as Global Youth Service Day.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. KLOBUCHAR). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SANDERS. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### OIL PRICES

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, this country faces many problems. All over this country people are worried about decent-paying jobs, the high cost of college education, and a disintegrating health care system. They are worried about the growing gap between the very rich and everybody else. But on Saturday, I held three town meetings around the State of Vermont: one in Norwich in the morning, one in Radford in the afternoon, and one in a small town in northern Vermont in Danville in the evening.

To nobody's surprise, the issue that is paramount on people's minds today is the outrageously high price of gas and home heating oil. Vermont is a rural State, which means people very often have to travel long distances to work. When they pay \$3.50 for a gallon of gas, it essentially means in most cases that any wage increase they might have gotten over the last year goes right into that gas pump. People are hurting. Wages, in fact, are often not going up. So the end result is that people are working longer hours for lower wages.

I have talked to many people who say: We used to go places. We used to travel. We can't afford to do that anymore. Also, obviously, in a State such as Vermont, where the weather gets very cold in the wintertime, the cost of home heating oil is a real burden. There are many people in my State and all over the country who are worried about how they are going to be able to heat their homes next winter.

We have a national crisis. It is a crisis that is not only impacting on gas prices at the pump or home heating oil prices. It impacts food and every other product we purchase because as oil prices go up, prices on so many of the products we buy are going to go up as well. This is a national crisis.

The time is long overdue for the White House and for Congress to begin to move forward in a comprehensive way. I would be less than honest if I told you I have a lot of confidence that the Bush-Cheney administration is going to do what is right. Just a month ago, President Bush, when asked about the high price of gas at the pump, was very surprised to learn, in fact, that it was going up.

Vice President CHENEY, who was the former CEO of Halliburton, deeply involved in the oil industry when they first came into power, met with representatives of the oil industry. They are representing, unfortunately, the oil industry. They are not representing the consumers of this country or working families. So it is incumbent on the Congress now in a comprehensive way to start moving forward.

This is a complicated issue. I don't think anyone believes there is one single cause for the rapid increase in oil prices, nor does anybody believe there is one single solution. But we do know some of the causes and what we have to do to lower the price of oil. If we are going to protect middle-class Americans, working Americans, that is exactly what we have to do.

While oil prices are soaring, what we should acknowledge is that the profits of huge oil companies are also soaring to recordbreaking levels. We know hedge fund managers make billions speculating on oil futures, and we know OPEC continues to function as a price-fixing cartel in violation of the World Trade Organization.

The average price for a gallon of gas recently hit a recordbreaking \$3.53 a gallon, which has more than doubled since George W. Bush has been President. The price of diesel fuel is now averaging over \$4 a gallon, and the price of oil is hovering at close to \$120 a barrel. These prices say it all. We have a national emergency on our hands. The time is now for this Congress, this Senate, to act boldly to protect consumers.

Recordbreaking oil and gas prices at the pump are posing a crisis not only to commuters going to work, especially in rural areas, but family farmers, consumers, small businesses, truckers, airlines, grocery stores, restaurants, hotels, tourists, and every sector of our economy.

High oil prices are one of the reasons we are moving toward a serious recession which will impact not just this country but the entire world.

The national oil emergency we are currently experiencing demands both a short-term and a long-term solution. Long term, we must reduce our dependency on fossil fuel, we must move to energy efficiency, we must move to sustainable energy—and the potential there is enormous. It is enormous. We can save huge amounts of energy when we have a transportation system that enables us to drive hybrid cars, to get cars that get 70, 80 miles per gallon, where we have a mass transportation system. There is enormous potential in terms of solar thermal plants, which produce huge amounts of electricity. There is enormous potential in terms of wind, other forms of solar. We have to focus and invest in those technologies.

But over the short term, today, we have to understand that while we move forward in transforming our energy system, we must respond to the pain