

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

ANN ARBOR 48104

MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH INSTITUTE  
GARDNER C. QUARTON, M.D., DIRECTOR

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHIATRY  
ALBERT J. SILVERMAN, M.D., CHAIRMAN

1974 March 26

Aurelio Peccei and  
Executive Committee, Club of Rome

Re: CoR Research Conference on Megafamine

Dear Aurelio and friends:

This is to propose to the Executive Committee that the Club of Rome consider as a major project for the next year the organization of a transnational and transdisciplinary research conference or on-going study group on the prospects of "megafamine" and what to do about it. By "megafamine" I mean a "big famine", bigger than any the human race has ever seen, with the possibility of 10 million to 100 million people in one or two regions dying of starvation or starvation-associated diseases. "What to do about it" would include the urgent build-up of an adequately financed and well-organized World Food Stockpile and distribution network.

I see several reasons for urgent action to organize such a conference now:

1. The CoR "Report from Tokyo" made clear the marked changes in the weather in the last few years (also documented in an article in Fortune magazine last month), together with the limited prospects for food increases under present institutional arrangements. This suggests that the doubling of world population in the next 30 years as suggested by demographers may be cut back by 1 billion or 2 billion people from starvation, before present birth control programs become effective. The starvation level from climate change is already at the level of 100,000 per year in the Sahel and Ethiopia alone; and the higher figures mentioned above are suggested, in a recent book by Richard L. Meier, as being probable with climatic changes in regions at the margin of subsistence such as India, parts of Africa, and perhaps Northwest China.
2. Organized study and publication of the results on an urgent and transnational basis -- perhaps following the example of Carroll Wilson's summer study groups on "Man's Impact on the Global Environment" or of the Forrester-Meadows study on "Limits to Growth" -- might provide the background materials and the understanding to facilitate humanitarian-citizen organization, government organization, and UN organization to anticipate and deal with the famines that are likely to become massive and apparent in the next two years. If we have done our homework and publicized what must be done, these "catalytic crises" can then become stepping stones to global organization instead of massive despair.
3. The famine and food problem is inherently multidisciplinary -- involving all the sciences from meteorology to chemical engineering, biology, oceanography, demography, sociology, economics, politics and forecasting -- and can serve as both a model and a focus for getting scientists everywhere to be concerned and involved with bringing their knowledge to bear on problems of human survival.
4. This problem, more than any other problem, will draw upon whatever reserves of conscience or humanity the nations and the peoples have for going beyond national interests and beginning to build the needed structures for mankind. If it cannot be solved, what can? But if it can be solved, it will give us a base from which we can move on to more difficult questions.

Let me know what you think.

Peace,  
*John Platt*  
John Platt

NELLO CELIO  
a. BUNDESPRÄSIDENT

3006 Bern, December 2 nd. 1975.  
Brunnadernstrasse 29.

Dr. Aurelio Peccei  
President of the Club of Rome,  
163 Via Giorgione

00147 R O M E

Dear Dr. Peccei,

I realize that according to the Statutes of The Club of Rome, art. 7, the members of the Executive Committee have to be re-elected every three years.

I understand that the present Committee was constituted during the General Assembly for 1972, in Jouy-en-Josas (January 26 and 27 , 1973)

Considering that there will be no General Assembly in 1975, I would suggest , by this letter, that the present members of the Executive Committee be invited to continue their mandate for the next period of three years. I am sure that I am expressing the opinion of the other members of The Club of Rome when making this suggestion, because of the excellent work which has been performed by the present members of the Executive Committee, and I am confident that they will continue to do their best for the future of the Club.

To you, as the initiator of the Club of Rome and the President of its Executive Committee, I would like to express my deep gratitude and admiration for your personal involvement.

Your sincerely,



Nello Celio.