

Norman Borlaug - Acceptance Speech

Norman Borlaug's Acceptance Speech, on the occasion of the award of the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, December 10, 1970

Your Majesty, Your Royal Highnesses, Madam Chairman, Members of the Nobel Committee, Your Excellencies, and Ladies and Gentlemen

The requirement of an acceptance speech on this occasion implies that an incipient Nobel Laureate must have some reasons for rationalizing both his election and his acceptance. To refuse the honor of election would be to question the judgment of those who elected me. And this I would not do, except perhaps in private, especially here in the Land of my Fathers and in the presence of an international group of guests who have congregated to honor a significant occasion rather than a single individual.

Accordingly, I shall not dwell upon the personal honor, for I have not done so even within myself. Instead, I want to devote my remarks to commendation of the Nobel Committee which had the perspicacity and wisdom to recognize the actual and potential contributions of agricultural production to prosperity and peace among the nations and peoples of the world.

Obviously, I am personally honored beyond all dreams by my election. But the obligations imposed by the honor are far greater than the honor itself, both as concerns me personally and also the army of hunger fighters in which I voluntarily enlisted a quarter of a century ago for a lifetime term. I am acutely conscious of the fact that I am but one member of that vast army and so I want to share not only the present honor but also the future obligations with all my companions in arms, for the Green Revolution has not yet been won.

It is true that the tide of the battle against hunger has changed for the better during the past three years. But tides have a way of flowing and then ebbing again. We may be at high tide now, but ebb tide could soon set in if we become complacent and relax our efforts. For we are dealing with two opposing forces, the scientific power of food production and the biologic power of human reproduction. Man has made amazing progress recently in his potential mastery of these two contending powers. Science, invention, and technology have given him materials and methods for increasing his food supplies substantially and sometimes spectacularly, as I hope to prove tomorrow in my first address as a newly decorated and dedicated Nobel Laureate. Man also has acquired the means to reduce the rate of human reproduction effectively and humanely. He is using his powers for increasing the rate and amount of food production. But he is not yet using adequately his potential for decreasing the rate of human reproduction. The result is that the rate of population increase exceeds the rate of increase in food production in some areas.

There can be no permanent progress in the battle against hunger until the agencies that fight for increased food production and those that fight for population control unite in a common effort. Fighting alone, they may win temporary skirmishes, but united they can win a decisive and lasting victory to provide food and other amenities of a progressive civilization for the benefit of all mankind.

Then, indeed, Alfred Nobel's efforts to promote Brotherhood between nations and their peoples will become a reality.

Let our wills say that it shall be so.

From [*Les Prix Nobel en 1970*](#), Editor Wilhelm Odelberg, [Nobel Foundation], Stockholm, 1971