



## CROP History

CROP grew out of the fields of middle America. It was born in 1947, in response to the needs of hungry and suffering people in post-War Europe and Asia. U.S. Christians wanted to help their overseas neighbors in need.

CROP's original mission was to collect food commodities -- primarily grain -- and ship them overseas. Trains, boats, and eventually planes would come into play.

For awhile it looked as if the new organization's name would be Christian Rural Overseas Relief. The first three words were a natural fit, according to John Metzler Sr., CROP's first director. "It was Leslie Moss of Church World Service who suggested that we pick some word beginning with a P, so we could have CROP as a name. Program was selected and CROP had a name."

For five years, CROP was jointly sponsored by Church World Service, the Catholic Rural Life Conference, and Lutheran World Relief. In 1952, CROP reverted to Church World Service, its original sponsor.

From its inception, rural grain canvasses had been the lifeblood of CROP fund raising. But by the late '60s, when David Bower was assigned to set up a CROP office in Michigan, the rural canvass was, in Bower's words, "a hard row to hoe."

"I worked with the Farm Bureau and local pastors to organize a group that would go door-

to-door in an area to promote the canvass," says Bower, CWS regional director in Michigan.

"There just didn't seem to be the energy in Michigan for that sort of thing. I'd heard something about CROP Walks, an experimental idea being tried in a couple of states. It sounded interesting to me but my superiors weren't too supportive. I was told I could try the 'walk thing,' but my main effort should stay on canvasses."

Superiors aren't always right, and this new 'walk thing' was to revolutionize the CROP program. As Bower points out, "In the last 36 years, Michigan CROP Hunger Walks have generated over \$39 million to support local hunger agencies and the global hunger/poverty programs of CWS. Not bad for an experiment!"

With a shift from a rural agricultural focus to a suburban/urban base in the '70s, CROP became simply the Community Hunger Appeal of Church World Service.

As CROP Hunger Walks have enjoyed continued success, they have become vital, interfaith community-wide events -- an opportunity for people from throughout a community to come together to help neighbors in need *around the block and around the world.*

**CROP now stands for Communities Responding to Overcome Poverty** -- a worthy name for our response to hunger and poverty in an ever-changing world."

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