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Thomas Lines

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MAKING POVERTY **A HISTORY**



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Thomas Lines : Making Poverty: A History before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Making Poverty: A History:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Good proposals for ending poverty By William Podmore Thomas Lines, a freelance consultant in international agricultural markets, has written a most persuasive book on how to end poverty. He points out that poor countries have small populations, are remote, depend on exporting primary commodities to the global market, and import more food than they export. Three quarters of the world's 1.2 billion poorest people live in rural areas. Lines writes that the IMF and World Bank `promote and protect the interests of

global capital'. They claim that the market lifts food prices, benefiting the poor. Instead, world food prices have halved since 1960. Twelve of the world's poorest countries are poorer than in 1985. In Britain, since 1988, the prices that farmers got for their produce have risen by just 3.4%: retail food prices rose by more than 50%. Global free markets have benefited speculators and supermarkets, not producers or consumers, producing 'unfathomable wealth for those who have worked in finance'. Investors speculate in primary commodities, turning 2007's food price problem into 2008's world food crisis. The supermarkets have become the masters, the price makers, controlling global supplies. Lines proposes that national governments, not the World Bank or the World Trade Organisation, should decide their own policies. Governments should stop relying on exports to volatile commodity markets: rural policy should start from national food security, not foreign trade. Governments should support domestic agriculture and the production of staple foods, feeding their own people first. Governments should cut corporate power and raise agricultural workers' wages. Governments should raise and stabilise agricultural products' international prices. Governments should promote domestic and regional trade, especially in staple foods. Lines finishes by writing, "this approach is the only humane one and it has to be pursued, in the face of the powerful vested interest that will inevitably oppose it."

In this clear and intelligent book, Thomas Lines examines the role that global policies have played in creating a crisis of rural poverty. He explains the mechanisms of markets and supply chains, charting their impact on agricultural trade in the world's poorest countries. A desperate situation is emerging which could soon leave little place for hundreds of millions of smallholders across the world, as the global supply chains of giant food corporations and supermarkets swallow them up. Poor countries have become newly vulnerable to price changes for crops like rice and wheat, and the situation is set to deteriorate further if global policies do not change. The author argues that debates about world trade negotiations have only highlighted part of the problem: we must turn our attention to wider economic policies, the workings of the markets themselves and the division of power along the supply chains, to establish a practical set of solutions. Combining analytical rigour with a clearly accessible examination of the key factors, the author deftly points to the forms that these solutions could take.

'Tom Lines combines a lifelong commitment to development with a thorough knowledge of the complexities of global markets. Cutting expertly through economic jargon and myth, he explains why markets, far from being neutral, reflect the power and politics of those who govern them, determining who wins and who loses from globalization. You don't have to agree with every detail of his analysis to learn from this salutary reminder that the current boom in commodity prices is not the end of a history of commodity dependence which has left deep scars on the developing world.'

Duncan Green, Oxfam 'Thomas Lines explains with science and erudite, committed scholarship why it is necessary to understand the History of Poverty in order to make poverty history. Historically embedded structures of production and international trade make peasant farmers of the South hostage to a value chain from which they pick up crumbs, whilst traders and financiers accumulate wealth. The answer is not to find a place in the existing value chain, but to break it. This book must form part of an obligatory learning discipline by all who care to make poverty history.'

Yash Tandon, South Centre 'A timely, clearly-written book that shows how and why commodity markets fail, how they undermine food security and how poverty is made not fated. Lines unpicks the public policies, private standards and buyer power that impoverish but also discusses solutions; from prioritising food security not foreign trade, development of domestic and regional markets, reform of commodity markets and development of global competition policy to tackle the concentration of corporate power.'

Geoff Tansey, author of *The Food System and The Future Control of Food* 'This book shines a spotlight exactly where it is needed -- on the 900 million poor people in rural areas in the world. Rather than being 'assigned to the economic scrap heap' by the way global markets are currently organised, this book shows how radically changed policies can both help these people out of poverty and can provide the engine for true sustainable and just development.'

Stewart Wallis, The New Economics Foundation 'A most persuasive book.'

Will Podmore, The Tribune 'A book packed with clear arguments alongside tables and statistics showing how global economic policies have created poverty on the most local levels.'

VoteGlobal

About the Author Thomas Lines is a freelance consultant specializing in international agricultural markets. He started his working life as a journalist reporting on the commodity and financial markets in London and Paris, and later became a lecturer in international business at Edinburgh University. He has worked as a team leader of agricultural aid projects and a policy advisor for U.N. agencies, leading NGOs, fair-trade and trade union organizations. The author has worked in more than 40 countries and speaks fluent French and Russian. He was a candidate for the Green Party in the 2005 general election.