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PRECARIOUS WELFARE

Imagine an uninhabited island with a population of about 1,000 head of deer. Suppose this population of deer is held in check by the inadequacy of abundant parasite-free water¹, by a certain number of pumas², and by a limited amount of forage³.

Now what will happen if you construct one clean and steadily flowing water trough or well, hold a successful puma hunt every year, and introduce successfully a few new forage grasses? The deer population will increase.

But if you let the water supply become clogged and infected, stop killing the predatory animals, and allow the forage crops to be eliminated by overgrazing? The deer will starve or be killed back to the old level - or below it.

It seems to me that the main problem for us in India is to teach the Indians how to produce locally and by themselves the knowledge and skills now and till now furnished to them by the West. Medical science, stability of government, and agricultural technology have made possible the growth in population, and on these their enormous number now utterly depend.

Indians are not deer, but they are still dependent, and until they become independent we are playing with their welfare, precariously.

Alan Gregg

December 10, 1951
Bangalore, India

^{1,2,3} To correspond with the pestilence¹, war², and famine³ referred to by Malthus.