

# JFK Refuted Malthus

President John F. Kennedy on Oct. 22, 1963 debunked British economist Thomas Malthus's (1766-1834) genocidal theory that population growth inevitably outstrips food-production capability, and leads to starvation.

Addressing the National Academy of Sciences one month before his assassination, Kennedy [stated](#): “Malthus argued a century and a half ago that man, by using up all his available resources, would forever press on the limits of subsistence, thus condemning humanity to an indefinite future of misery and poverty. We can now begin to hope and, I believe, know that Malthus was expressing not a law of nature, but merely the limitation then of scientific and social wisdom.”

Kennedy went on to prescribe the government

policy, scientific advancement, and international cooperation needed for expanded output to feed a growing population:

“The truth or falsity of [Malthus's] prediction will depend now, with the tools we have, on our own actions. . . . The Earth can be an abundant mother to all of the people that will be born in the coming years. . . . Abundance depends now on the application of sound biological analysis to the problems of agriculture, and the long-term answer to inadequate food production, which brings misery with it, must lie in new research and new experimentation, and the successful use of new knowledge will require close cooperation with other nations.”

The President proposed concerted international scientific work, new infrastructure, and nuclear power to solve such problems as resource development, protection from catastrophic weather, and overcoming poverty.

—*Michael Kirsch and Anton Chaitkin*