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# THE·JOHN·RAY·INITIATIVE

promoting·environmental·sustainability

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## April 2001 – Stop Press

### **Invitation**

The appointment of Dr Peter Carruthers as our first Executive Director signals a new phase for JRI. We plan to expand our work in a number of ways, in accordance with our mission to develop and communicate an understanding of environmental stewardship that combines Christian principles with the wise use of science and technology.

To inaugurate this new phase, on Tuesday the 15<sup>th</sup> of May at the Francis Close Hall campus of the Cheltenham and Gloucester College of HE, we are holding a 'Commissioning Service' in the College Chapel at 5.30 pm, followed by a Reception in the Refectory at 6.15 pm. I should be very pleased if you were able to join us for either or both these events. Not only will they provide a 'launch pad' for our new phase of development, but also an opportunity for friends of JRI to meet staff and directors as well as each other. I do hope you will be able to come.

*Sir John Houghton*  
Chairman

*RSVP to the JRI Office (see enclosed form)*

## **Foot-and-mouth disease**

### **The outbreak**

In just eight weeks, foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) has engulfed large areas of the UK. The first case was confirmed near Brentwood, Essex on 20 February 2001. By 17 April, 1363 cases had been confirmed in 32 counties of Great Britain, with a further 3 in Northern Ireland. In addition, according to information recently reported by *Farmers Weekly* more than 1800 farms have seen all their livestock slaughtered as a precautionary measure. By 16 April, 1,990,000, animals had been authorised for slaughter - approximately 3.6% of the combined UK population of cattle, sheep and pigs. The number of farms with confirmed cases to date is about 0.6% of the total number of holdings in the UK, and about 1.1% of predominantly livestock holdings.

### **Consequences**

On farms with infected livestock, the disease is devastating. The consequences of the outbreak, however, reach far beyond the farms directly affected. For a farming industry already in crisis, FMD seems like the last straw. The strict controls on the movement of animals and people in the countryside, necessary to contain the disease, have impacted on all livestock farmers and have cut deep into rural tourism and related businesses. Immediate environmental consequences include those arising from the disposal of slaughtered livestock (indeed, as I write, I am conscious of the smell of a pyre just a few miles away). Longer-term changes could arise from changes in farming practice, such as the ploughing-up of pasture on farms that have lost their herds or flocks.

### **Challenges**

The crisis presents Christians with three important challenges. The first is to pray. Whatever way we explain the causes of crises, the Bible makes it clear that our response must be to humble ourselves, to turn to God and pray (eg 2 Chronicles 7:13-14).

Second, Christians need to respond with love and compassion to those whose lives have been devastated by this 'plague'. It is encouraging that Christian- based organisations, such as *Farm Crisis Network* and the *Arthur Rank Centre*, as well as many local churches and individuals, have been at the forefront, along with others, in seeking to comfort and help those caught up in the crisis.

### **Stewardship**

Third, beyond the immediate crisis must be a thorough evaluation of the causes and consequences of the outbreak, and a reconsideration and 'reconstruction' of our farming and food production structures and systems. Principles of stewardship of the earth and care of creation (as, for example, set out in JRI Briefing Papers 1 and 9) provide a radical critique of the practices and policies that contributed to the present crisis as well as a sound basis for sustainable agriculture. In the evaluation and reconstruction that will follow the FMD outbreak,

there is an urgent need for ethical perspectives and prophetic voices that point beyond immediate

economic or political concerns to environmental responsibility and social justice, and, ultimately, to our answerability to our Creator.

### Future plans

We plan to investigate the FMD outbreak and its wider significance over the next few weeks, and shall post our findings on the JRI Website. If you would like paper copy of this material, please send a SAE labelled 'FMD briefing'. We also plan to examine agriculture in the light of JRI's vision for responsible environmental stewardship and hope to report by early next year.

*Dr Peter Carruthers*  
*Executive Director*

Eternal God, creator and sustainer of life, we praise you for the beauty and fertility of the earth. We praise you also for its complexity and mystery before which we bow in wonder and awe.

Hear our prayers for all upon whom we depend for the production and provision of our food, for the management of the countryside and the husbanding of its resources. To those who are suffering in the present crisis bring comfort and hope; To those entrusted with the decision-making that affects others' lives give wisdom and discernment;

To your church in its ministry to all, grant a watchful eye, a loving heart and a prophetic voice in the service of your Kingdom; and through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*From 'Prayers for use during FMD outbreak',  
Arthur Rank Centre  
<http://www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk/>*

## Communications

### Electronic news

We are moving towards electronic distribution of JRI literature, including newsletters. Our aim in this is to provide more timely information and resources, and also to save money and labour. If we have your email address you will also receive the newsletter no.7 and stop press by email. We welcome your views on this (please see enclosed form).

Please tell us of anyone who you think would like to receive JRI's newsletter or other literature from us.

### Your news items

Please tell us any news, particularly about anything in which you have been involved that relates to JRI's concerns. If appropriate, we shall try to include some of these items in future newsletters.

### Resources gateway

Now we have extra staff, the online resources directory will move forward. Please contact us if you have expertise or interest in particular subjects as we need reviewers. A draft outline of the gateway, indicating the broad categories to be covered, can be viewed at <http://www.jri.org.uk/hub/>

### JRI Logo

A logo design is needed. We are inviting designs from art students at CGCHE, but if you have any suggestions we would be pleased to receive them.

### Two new JRI patrons

The following have recently become patrons of the John Ray Initiative.

- The Rt Revd Richard Chartres, Bishop of London.
- Professor Graham Ashworth CBE (President of the Baptist Union).

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