

MARK BITTMAN: “I STOPPED EATING ON MONDAY”

NYT’s food columnist Mark Bittman has given up food:

I stopped eating on Monday and joined around 4,000 other people in a fast to call attention to Congressional budget proposals that would make huge cuts in programs for the poor and hungry.

By doing so, I surprised myself; after all, I eat for a living. But the decision was easy after I spoke last week with David Beckmann, a reverend who is this year’s World Food Prize laureate. Our conversation turned, as so many about food do these days, to the poor.

Who are – once again – under attack, this time in the House budget bill, H.R. 1. The budget proposes cuts in the WIC program (which supports women, infants and children), in international food and health aid (18 million people would be immediately cut off from a much-needed food stream, and 4 million would lose access to malaria medicine) and in programs that aid farmers in underdeveloped countries. Food stamps are also being attacked, in the twisted “Welfare Reform 2011” bill. (There are other egregious maneuvers in H.R. 1, but I’m sticking to those related to food.)

These supposedly deficit-reducing cuts – they’d barely make a dent – will quite literally cause more people to starve to death, go to bed hungry or live more miserably than are doing so now. And: The bill would increase defense spending.

Bittman doesn't say it, of course, but just since Monday we've probably dropped enough bombs on Libya to offset these cuts.

We're spending an average of \$55 million a day to bomb Libyans while, as Bittman says, people here are going to bed hungry.

I don't care where you come down on the question of whether we have a national interest in Libya or not. Until someone explains why that national interest is greater than feeding our own children, or until some decides to start taxing GE and Bank of America to pay for this, the action is illegitimate.