

Agriculture by Mary McCourt

Democrats debate farm policy

Adapting to planned shrinkage was the majority recommendation at a session on the party's agriculture policy.

The Averell Harriman wing of the Democratic Party turned out in force on Oct. 15 in Dallas, Texas for the first of a series of meetings to draft the agricultural planks for the 1984 Democratic platform. But policy proposals from the Democratic National Committee (DNC) were strictly limited to promoting new labels for the current policies of the USDA and the international grain cartels: to stop U.S. production and make food "the oil of the 1980s," as Occidental Petroleum's Armand Hammer has suggested.

The DNC's new term, used repeatedly from the podium in Dallas, is "supply management." But American farmers have had a decade of supply management already. As a USDA spokesman told *EIR*, "PIK [the disastrous Payment in Kind program] is the best supply management program we've ever had."

The Democrats' meeting, attended by 150 people, was chaired by Texas Agricultural Commissioner Jim Hightower, a populist whose career has been heavily funded by environmentalist foundations. Hightower now heads the Democratic National Committee's Agriculture Council and has been mooted as a future Democratic Secretary of Agriculture. Hightower is an advocate of land-use reform, ostensibly in the interests of promoting conservation. But "conservation" is coming more and more into use as a means of taking control of production out of the hands of American family farmers—a group *EIR* founder and Democratic presidential candidate

Lyndon LaRouche has characterized as "the last entrepreneurs in our nation." As a spokesman at Hightower's office told *EIR*: "Farmers are not always the best people to decide what to grow on their land."

The meeting was keynoted by Sen. James Sasser (Tenn.) who called for deferments of farmers' FmHA payments and extension of agricultural emergency programs as part of his attack on Reagan administration high interest rates, which he called the primary reason for the decline in U.S. agriculture exports. But Sasser gave himself away. The Democratic Party, he said, must continue to support price support programs—in order to ensure that farmers will be able to pay off their debts.

It was former Texas congressman Bob Krueger, Jimmy Carter's ambassador to Mexico, who introduced supply management as the official theme of the day. Krueger's only criticism of PIK—along with the drought, the reason for the 50 percent loss in corn production this year—was that government grain reserves were too far away from some farmers for them to be able to take advantage of the program.

Former DNC chairman John White, who co-chaired and moderated the meeting, called the "radicalization" of farmers and rural Americans a threat to political control of the nation. White attacked the use of food as a weapon—one of Henry Kissinger's contributions to world strategic planning at the 1974 World Food Conference in Rome—but did not address the

international debt crisis that is destroying productive capability and making food a precious commodity.

Reality eventually forced its way onto the podium and into the debate when New Mexico's Gov. Tony Anaya, a member of the National Governors' Agriculture Commission, was the first official speaker to address the depth of the crisis in agriculture—and call expansion of production its solution. Anaya cited the quadrupling of agriculture debt since 1970, the loss of 100,000 family farms in recent years, and the fact that the cost of farm programs had shot up from \$2 billion in 1980 to \$25 billion after the introduction of PIK. America must increase food exports as a keystone of its foreign policy. "We don't need gunboat diplomacy in Central America," he stated. "We need to export food there."

And in contrast to the situation at most DNC-sponsored events, representatives of the LaRouche wing of the party were able to bring the international strategic crisis and the threat to the world food supply to the podium. Harley Schlanger, the National Democratic Policy Committee coordinator for the Southwest, stated that "there can be no solution to the farm crisis which does not begin by addressing the international debt crisis and the threat of global financial collapse. Henry Kissinger and his associates are planning to foreclose on entire nations in the same way that farms in the United States are being foreclosed, through seizure of assets. These policies must be defeated."

Schlanger was followed by LaRouche's agricultural adviser, Lawrence Freeman. Freeman coordinates a staff of researchers who are compiling solid statistics on the state of U.S. agriculture, in contrast to the fraudulent figures released by USDA.