

Agriculture by Robert L. Baker

Police-state raids hit farm belt

If you think "it can never happen here," look at what is already being done to America's agricultural producers.

After eight years of massive farm liquidations and the elimination of 250,000 U.S. farmers, the government bureaucracy and the national news media are silent about the financial onslaught that is destroying the independent family farmer. The silence hides the reality that forced dispossession of farmers is taking place under police-state conditions. Farm machinery, livestock, farm families themselves, are "disappearing" into the "night and fog," what the Nazis called *Nacht und Nebel*.

Take the case of the Dunkelberger family of Pilot Mound, Iowa: On April 17, four state patrol cars, four county patrol cars, six flatbed semi-trailor machinery trucks, 12 hired machinery jockeys, two Production Credit Association (PCA) loan officers, and one Federal Land Bank loan officer entered the farm of Harold Dunkelberger, while he was not at home. At about 11 a.m., Dunkelberger was coming back home in his grain truck, and noticed two state police patrol cars blocking his driveway. Dunkelberger reported that, as he stopped in front of them, "One officer held a shotgun on me, and told me to get out of my truck, while another searched me and my grain truck for a gun which I didn't have."

He then proceeded down his driveway to what he described as "a circus going on in my own farmyard," where deputies and 12 machinery movers were loading up not only his machinery, but his son's as well, onto flatbed semi-trucks. He also found that his house and three vehicles had been entered without a search warrant or

any official papers, and his five guns, his son's two baseball bats, and a hatchet were taken by officials, as if he were a dangerous criminal.

When he saw they were using his son's tractor and loader to try to lift very heavy machinery onto these trucks, he told them to stop, because they were abusing his son's tractor (the machinery being lifted was so heavy that it flattened the tractor's tires). Dunkelberger told the men that his son's machinery should be left alone.

To this, the head PCA loan officer, who is also the in-house PCA lawyer, replied viciously, "Go ahead and use it any way you see fit. I'm in charge here."

At this, Dunkelberger said he was going to call his lawyer, and headed toward his telephone, at which point, two deputies pulled their guns and escorted him into his house while he made the call to his lawyer. The attorney confirmed to him that it was illegal for them to take his son's machinery also. The PCA then left the son's machinery behind, but removed all of Dunkelberger's equipment from his farm.

According to Dunkelberger, the PCA had illegally put his son's 530 acres of cropland and machinery on a financial statement that the PCA talked him into signing before they had listed his collateral. In other words, he signed a blank form, at the loan officer's request, and later the loan officer falsely listed land and machinery belonging to Dunkelberger's son as collateral for the father's loan. As a result of this, Dunkelberger's son has lost his farm and has had to quit farming, but is still

fighting for his land in the courts.

The Dunkelbergers have been fighting the PCA through the courts since 1983, for the right to grow food and continue to farm. At 61, Dunkelberger, a graduate of Iowa State University, as of April 25 is in the Veterans Hospital in Iowa City for observation. His wife now has an off-farm job.

Another case: On March 17, the dairy farm of Belfield, North Dakota farmer Joe Obrigewitch was raided by 40 sheriff's deputies and county police, to execute a levy on behalf of the PCA and the Bank of Belfield. During the raid, Obrigewitch and his son Kurt, who were in town attending a court hearing on another matter, were arrested, charged with resisting a sheriff's levy, and thrown into jail. Their livestock and machinery were hauled to an auction site.

These two situations are not unusual. Since the turn of the year, *EIR* has been receiving similar reports from farmers in Georgia, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, and other farm regions.

Yet major farm publications comment on the "turnaround" that has allegedly come to agriculture, after the hard times of the mid-1980s. Recently, the publication *Wallace's Farmer* ran an editorial stating, "Even in the face of one of the worst droughts ever, the general agricultural economy appears to be gaining strength." Meantime, one agricultural lender says quietly that he "expects farm bankruptcies to jump 10% to 15%."

Federal bankruptcy trustee Fred Huenefeld of Monroe, Louisiana, a well-known activist for farmers' rights, commented, in reference to the increased dispossession of farmers, "You can't believe how fast this thing is escalating." All over the country, the silent sell-out of highly skilled U.S. food producers goes on.