

## Agriculture by Robert L. Baker

### The fraud of the Fowler bill

*Under the banner of 'sustainable agriculture,' the bill will take more cropland out of production.*

Sen. Wyche Fowler (D-Ga.) submitted a bill to Congress on May 2, entitled the Farm Conservation and Water Protection Act of 1989. This bill initiates a return to labor-intensive and unpredictable "sustainable" crop-growing methods, by implying that today's modern agricultural practices are "environmentally unsound" and that the U.S. has a major health problem from food grown using modern methods.

The bill was announced to a packed press gallery, with Fowler flanked by Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, and Sen. George Mitchell (D-Maine), Senate Majority Leader. This gives the Fowler bill the imprimatur of the Senate leadership, which means its New Age concepts will be taken up in the deliberations on the upcoming 1990 five year farm bill, which have just begun.

On hand at the press conference announcing the bill were dozens of Washington environmental lobbyists. The bill has been endorsed by the World Wildlife Fund, the Audubon Society, and other such groups. Its emphasis is to save "wetlands" and "wildlife"—not people and farms.

The low-input sustainable agriculture (LISA) methods that this bill endorses have virtually no scientifically researched data to prove that farmers using "sustainable" methods could produce the abundant yields of today's high-tech methods.

The bill specifies that the U.S. secretary of agriculture will establish a LISA program that is designed for "family-size farms." The official

congressional definition of a "family farm" is one that has gross farm product sales of less than \$40,000 per year. Fifty percent of U.S. farms fall into this category, yet these farms produce only 5% of the U.S. food supply. This bill caters to the majority of farmers who produce the least amount of food, but will establish new regulations that will affect the larger food growers who will probably not participate.

Technical guidelines describing LISA farm production programs will be created to ensure "substantial reductions in the use of fertilizers and pesticides."

This bill funds expanding federal bureaucracies for the purpose of developing regulatory mechanisms that will monitor how much food is grown, where it is grown, and how it is grown. One proposed new agency will be the Farm Conservation Service, which will coordinate funding for the research, analysis, and assistance to farmers for LISA systems that have not yet been thoroughly researched. A commission will be funded to certify organically grown food, and the Farmland Protection Act will be amended to establish a special assistant to regulate the disbursement of federal funds to farmers based on how they use their land.

Heavy endorsement by a full spectrum of environmental groups funded by malthusian anti-population foundations, makes this bill a very suspicious vehicle, to say the least. The National Wildlife Federation, in a letter of support, commends Senator Fowler, saying, "It is essential that we find ways to protect and restore wet-

lands." Senator Fowler's bill would pay farmers to return 5 million acres of what once was swamp but is now farmable lowlands—90% of which is capable of being cultivated—back into swampland.

The bill establishes a program to test well water on farms. If it is determined to be contaminated by chemicals at only 25% of the allowed regulatory levels established by the Environmental Protection Agency, the farmer will be required to implement a ground water protection plan based on controlled use of fertilizers and chemicals. If he refuses, then he must register his farming practices each year with the government.

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), which takes cropland out of production for 10 years, will be expanded from its current goal of 45 million acres to 60 million acres by 1995. In some cases, at least 50% of this land must be planted to trees for at least 15 years.

When directly confronted on the question of world food shortages by *EIR* Agriculture Editor Marcia Merry, Senators Fowler and Leahy attributed the problem to overpopulation.

"On the issue of population and feeding people," Merry asked, "... what might be the implications for implementing the things you're proposing in terms of therefore having famine?" Senator Fowler replied, "Whatever you want to call it, sustainable agriculture is possible at considerable yields with techniques, some tested in Egypt and Mesopotamia 3,000 years ago." Senator Leahy criticized "the abysmal record the administration has had in supporting family planning programs in other countries. . . . But we have a lot of land in this world that could be in agriculture and it's not, because of the enormous population growth."