

Agriculture by Marcia Merry

How not to save the family farm

Congress is considering a new bill that, typically, will accomplish the opposite of its purport.

A new food reduction bill was introduced in Congress on Sept. 23, by Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) and Rep. Richard Gephardt (D-Mo.). They're calling it the "Save the Family Farm" bill. It will definitely not save the family farm.

Nor will it maintain minimum food supplies for national and international needs. The bill has received the full bally-hoo treatment from the "farm mafia"—Nashville, the Eastern Establishment foundations, the grain company operatives, and the media. Both farmers and the general public are supposed to be fooled, at least through the November elections.

The backers of the initiative are mainly the "radical Democratic" farm faction, which aims to unseat Reaganite politicians on both farm and non-farm issues, especially the Strategic Defense Initiative. The pseudo-opposition to this group comes from Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kans.) who has an equally undesirable "free market" initiative he wants to make national farm policy. He wants to cut all guarantees on farm income.

Reagan personally, and some of his administration, oppose both the Harkin and the Dole group, but they have no comprehension of the food/farm disaster, or what to do about it. Anywhere "LaRouche-program" candidates (calling for increased production, low interest credit, no farm foreclosures, and an end to the IMF/Federal Reserve policies) have run for office this year, they have polled between 15% and 40% or more, whether as Democrats or Republicans. One

such farm leader in Oklahoma, George Gentry, polled 33% statewide in the August Democratic primary for U.S. Senate.

The "Save the Family Farm" bill calls for mandatory farm-commodity quotas, to be set by a process of farmer referenda, coordinated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, in the way the USDA took a wheat growers referendum this summer. The bill mandates output reduction of up to 35% in grains, soybeans, and milk.

The theory behind this is that then the "laws" of supply and demand will drive up the price the farmer receives for his products, once food become more scarce. Conspicuously absent from this equation is the role of the commodity cartel (Cargill, Continental, André/Garnac, Louis Dreyfus, Armand Hammer/IBP, Nestlé, and the others) in arbitrarily setting low prices, because of their dominant role in marketing, domestically and abroad. Lo and behold, many of the bill's boosters have well-known connections to the cartel.

The "Family Farm" bill is modeled on the hated laws of the 1930s, in which farmers were compelled "to kill every other pig, and plough under every other row," in a disastrous attempt to "improve" farm financial conditions by destroying commodities, and drastically cutting output. Only the World War II parity-price policy—combined with an all-out *production expansion* drive, pulled the farm sector out of depression.

Harkin's proposed bill would have an immediate, devastating effect on

the farm sector, as even inadequate USDA statistics indicate. An internal constrict U.S. agribusiness so severely that Gross National Product (a highly inflated figure in any case) would be reduced by \$71 billion, and nearly 2.2 million jobs would be lost. This would necessarily occur through a ripple-effect process of lost farm input production—fertilizers, seeds, chemicals, equipment and fuel, lost harvesting and processing services, and lost farm community spending, etc.

To give an "aura" of farmer support for the bill, a conference was held in St. Louis, Missouri, called the "United Farmer and Rancher Congress," the same week as Harkin introduced his bill. The three-day event was funded in part by Willie Nelson's FarmAID, Inc., part of the "country sound" division of the national entertainment mafia. Nelson is notorious for his defense of drugs during the Carter years. There was one famous incident where he was so spaced out he could not sing the words to the national anthem (maybe he didn't know them in the first place).

FarmAID makes a pretense of giving out emergency help for food, legal and medical services, and contributes most of its money to farm crisis telephone "hot line" groups, otherwise funded and controlled by the Ford Foundation and similar Eastern Establishment circles, who support the drastic decrease in U.S. farms.

The chairwoman at the Farm Congress was Ann Kanton, the assistant agriculture commissioner of Minnesota, where Cargill itself runs the so-called radical farm policy initiatives. Kanton's PR theme was, "I think the message can go to all of America that farmers, farm organizations, the bankers, the business people, the clergy have all spoken with one voice."

In sum, Willie Nelson says, don't produce food.