

The Food for Peace battle-cry: Farmers and eaters, unite!

by Suzanne Rose

At the July 1988 Democratic Convention in Atlanta, Georgia, Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., then a candidate for the party's presidential nomination, circulated a draft platform in which he argued that the growing world food crisis would lead the Soviet Union, now importing huge amounts of U.S. grain, to seek military solutions to acquire the food it requires. Eastern Europe had already been bled dry by Moscow; now Western Europe would emerge as the danger point. Thus, a twin danger of mass starvation and potential for war had arisen from the worldwide drought and years of U.S. Department of Agriculture policies to curb farm production.

In August, a group of farm leaders and other political activists to launched an organizing drive to found the Food for Peace movement internationally, taking their impetus from LaRouche's analysis. Food for Peace would seek to return to the American people the mandate that had been given after World War II, to grow food to feed a hungry world. It would work to defeat the "Europe 1992" plan to shut down West European food production. And it would bring together an international network of political forces to break the power of the malthusian food cartel, and to unleash the immense productive capabilities of the world's farmers.

LaRouche, in his keynote address to a conference of the new organization in Chicago on Dec. 10, underlined that this is *not* a movement of farmers—that would be suicidal. "Let me be very brutally frank about this. . . . In general, except for a handful of farmers in this country, among farmers they behave like a bunch of idiots! When you tell farmers how they ought to organize, they say, 'No, we're just going to organize farmers, and we farmers as farmers will work out tactics for solving our problems.' Where are those farmers today? Where are those farm organizations which had this great, oh-so-wise policy?"

"On the other hand, you go to the other side of the tracks, you go to the people who eat. And you say to them, 'Look, if the farmers are not able to produce, what's going to happen to your diet?' And they say, 'I don't depend on farmers. I buy my food at the supermarket.' . . .

"Society is divided into two kinds of people, according to the late President Johnson: producers and consumerists. 'And we have to protect the consumerists against the producers.' Matter of fact, we have succeeded. Only less than 10% of the total population of the United States is in any way

productive. Guess why we have inflation! Guess why we are poor! Someone said we have too much agriculture, too much industry, too much infrastructure. . . .

"The farmers and the eaters must unite! They have but one cause, one common interest. The people of no nation have any different interest than that of any other nation in this matter."

War on the USDA, food cartel

At the founding conference of Food for Peace in Chicago Sept. 3-4, an organizing program was debated and adopted. It supported low-interest credit for farming; an end to the policy of taking tillable farmland out of production; cheap, plentiful water supplies through U.S. government support for such projects as the North American Water and Power Alliance (NAWAPA) river-and-canal link plan; and an end to environmental restrictions which destroy the food supply. The key demand of the founding principles was a parity price for farmers—a guaranteed price high enough to meet farmers' costs of production plus enough profit to allow for modernization.

The conference occurred amidst new efforts to drive down the farmer's price and open up farmland to corporate takeovers. The international grain cartel is out to eliminate all farm subsidies by the year 2000; this is the policy of U.S. Trade Representative Clayton Yeutter and other cartel representatives who made up the U.S. negotiating team at the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) talks in Montreal on Dec. 5-9. Given the fact that the U.S. farmer is paid less than 50% of parity, Yeutter's policy could only be read as a declaration of war on the family farmer.

At the Chicago conference, the myth of the existence of surpluses was debunked by European experts, who reported that there were never surpluses in Europe, only reserves equal to three months' consumption. In the United States, due to drought, corn production in the Midwest granary was less than 50% of normal.

During October, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) warned that world grain reserves were below the danger level, and said that it would be necessary for the West to produce an additional 230 million tons just to bring production up to the levels of the past two years—figures woefully inadequate to meet world needs. Food for Peace

called for grain production to be increased by 1 billion metric tons this year.

To this end, a packet of legislation was put together which could be introduced when legislatures reconvene in January 1989, in time to affect the spring planting. The legislation calls for an end to farm foreclosures, a moratorium on farm debt, parity prices, and would prevent farmland from being turned over to the multinationals, cartels, banks, and insurance companies. Food for Peace organizers met with legislators in farm states, to enlist their support.

Grass-roots organizing drive

Following the founding of Food for Peace, 23 statewide meetings and hundreds of smaller meetings were held in the key farm states. Food for Peace representatives from Europe briefed the participants on similar policies to those bankrupting the American farmer, which the European Commission is imposing in Western Europe. French farm activist Aline Cotten reported that farmers in her native Brittany were dumping their milk, so as to not be penalized for going over the production quota. West German farmer Edmund Belle described the efforts of the environmentalist movement to ban all use of fertilizers containing nitrogen. New Zealand farmer John Neill explained how his country had gone from one of the world's top food-exporting nations, to one forced to import three-quarters of its national requirements.

Other regional meetings featured speakers from food banks, who had suddenly found their supply of government surplus food for the needy cut out, with the cessation of the USDA's TEMP program. One minister from Houston, Texas, who was used to feeding hundreds of people through his food pantry, was forced to shut it down repeatedly. A food bank coordinator who supplies food to mothers and children in the Chicago area reported that there had been no beef, cheese, or butter for six months. One million people in the Houston area will require some form of food assistance from government and private relief efforts this year.

Another important theme was the situation in the developing sector. Countries like Sudan have been devastated this year by locust infestation and flooding, and received no emergency food assistance from the West. Food for Peace issued a resolution, "Stop Genocide in Sudan!" which called for emergency action to prevent mass starvation, spraying programs to wipe out the locust swarms and their breeding areas, and for junking the International Monetary Fund's austerity conditionalities policy, in order to relaunch and complete all necessary water control and irrigation projects. A spokesman for the Egyptian consulate in San Francisco affirmed the destruction of food-producing capabilities in his country, at a Food for Peace meeting on the West Coast. He said that although Egypt was self-sufficient in producing its meagre diet 20 years ago, today 50% must be imported.

On Oct. 12, Lyndon LaRouche held a press conference in West Berlin and proposed that the West's strength in pro-

ducing food be used as a weapon for peace. Instead of allowing future wars to be caused by the way the Soviet Empire reacts to its food shortages, why not commit ourselves to producing the food a nation like Poland needs, without diminishing what is available for the rest of the world, in return for which, the Soviets would free East Germany?

The week of Thanksgiving, 80-100,000 U.S. farmers received notices that their Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) loans were in arrears and were offered the choice between "restructuring" and foreclosure. Many farm groups jumped on the bandwagon, offering their help to farmers to fill out the restructuring paperwork, although in fact certain provisions of the 160-page packet would undermine a farmer's rights and take away his land.

This "restructuring" conforms to the policy espoused by the U.S. agriculture secretary under Jimmy Carter, Bob Bergland, for reducing the number of farmers by 80%. It would take vital farmland out of cultivation and constitute a threat to national security and sovereignty, because it would mean that the multinational cartels and insurance companies which are buying up the bankrupt farms and farmland would control the food supply.

Three U.S. farmers traveled to Europe in preparation for the European Food for Peace Conference in Nauheim, West Germany on Dec. 3, sponsored by the Schiller Institute's Agriculture Commission. The U.S. farmers, from North Dakota, Nebraska, and Pennsylvania, joined two farmers from New Zealand, and toured West Germany, France, Denmark, and Sweden, speaking to groups of up to 80 people. A delegation of seven European farmers, two from New Zealand, and one from Australia attended the international conference in Chicago Dec. 10-11.

New level of activation

At that conference, an audience of 600 people discussed how they could act, quickly, to prevent disaster, in the global strategic and economic context which LaRouche had described in his keynote address. A timetable for eliminating the influence of GATT on farm policy was set by *EIR*'s Agriculture Editor Marcia Merry, who gave a firsthand report on the just-concluded GATT negotiations in Montreal. The talks had been stalled, she said, due in large part to the success of the Food for Peace forces in ripping the mask of "national interest" from the rhetoric of Clayton Yeutter and the European Commission. There are now four months to reverse U.S. farm policies, before GATT reconvenes in April.

Farmers agreed to go into the cities to mobilize people around the policies which will allow them to produce food. This process began during the weeks leading up to the conference, when farmers went to Midwest cities to speak at churches and other locations on the issues of parity price, debt moratorium, foreclosures, and the other issues which will determine what food the "eaters" will find on supermarket shelves this year.