

FERTILIZER SABOTAGE THREATENS SPRING PLANTING

Jan. 5 (IPS)--This week a clear pattern of Rockefeller sabotage emerged--involving a series of natural gas cut-offs and Environmental Protection Agency rulings--which could seriously disrupt fertilizer and tractor production. If farmers fail to obtain necessary amounts of fertilizer, or if scarcity-induced high prices prohibit them from buying new farm equipment or parts needed to make repairs, this year's harvests will be severely curtailed. This new crisis in agricultural inputs comes just at the point when farmers must meet a staggering \$65 billion in debt payments which simply cannot be covered by their reduced cash receipts. The credit and cost-squeeze currently engulfing the farmer threatens the entire working class with looming massive food shortages.

Fertilizer in Danger

Nitrogen fertilizer production was sharply curtailed at two North Carolina plants this week, following the announcement of Transcontinental Gas Pipeline Co. that it will cut the state's natural gas supplies by 45 per cent. Natural gas is the essential feedstock used for ammonia production, the intermediate product in the production of nitrogen fertilizer. The two affected plants--Farmers' Chemical in Tunnis, N.C., and the Rockefeller-controlled W. R. Grace Co. in Wilmington, N.C., supply all of North Carolina's fertilizer needs! W. R. Grace stated that it has cut production by 30 per cent and--as if this were not enough--that the Environmental Protection Agency could shut the plant down completely since pollution is worse at lower production levels. Farmers' Chemical, which supplies the Southern states with 55 per cent of their nitrogen, announced it will close its Tunnis, N.C. plant for three-and-one-half months.

North Carolina Commissioner of Agriculture Jim Graham, extremely upset over the prospective devastation of next year's crop due to the fertilize shortage, was briefed by U.S. Labor Party organizers on the Party's Emergency Food Program. Graham's response was: "I understand what you're saying, but this isn't at all political. Believe me, it's a matter of survival."

The fertilizer shortage exacerbates the risk associated with spring planting causing crop yields to plunge. One of the Commissioner's assistants later outlined the extent of the upcoming crop shortfalls, predicting a 50 to 60 per cent cut in the corn crop and a 50 per cent decline in sweet potatoes. Soybeans need little nitrogen, but farmers cannot afford to buy seed. He reported that farmers have taken heavy losses and credit is "even more difficult than we thought it would be."

Other fertilizer production is bound to be affected as severe natural gas cuts at the behest of the Transcontinental Gas Pipeline Co. and East Tennessee Natural Gas Company are now rippling

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through 11 other states, including New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee. This disruption of fertilizer production is calculated to drive prices sky-high on a scale comparable to last year's oil hoax, which raised fertilizer prices by 80 per cent. Last year's price robbery directly reduced fertilizer usage by 10 per cent. This time many farmers wonder whether they can afford to buy any at all.

Rockefeller's hand in this affair is unmistakable since natural gas production and distribution is owned lock, stock, and barrel by Rockefeller interests. Over 60 per cent of natural gas production is concentrated in the hands of Exxon, their Rockefeller companies, and the rest of the Seven Sisters in the oil cartel. Chase Manhattan, Morgan Guaranty Trust, and First National City Bank between them control practically every major utility and gas pipeline company through interlocking directorates.

The just-released Federal Power Commission report alleging that natural gas is "a resource being pushed toward exhaustion" is a patent lie. According to the oil and gas industry itself, there are proven reserves in the ground sufficient for 12 years more of consumption at the current rate, 22 trillion cubic feet per year, or about 250 trillion cubic feet in areas with wells already drilled and in use. Estimated reserves in addition, including Alaska, bring this figure to 2,300 trillion cubic feet, which have not been drilled.

Abundant reserves are also available in Canada, simply waiting for a continental working class strike force to free production from Rockefeller control and tap them for a massive industrial expansion.

EPA COVERS FOR COLLAPSE OF TRACTOR PRODUCTION

Jan. 4 (IPS)--Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rulings were used this week as the pretext for the partial closing of the U.S. Steel plant in Gary, Ind. and layoffs at Wisconsin Steel in Chicago, both key suppliers of the agricultural implement industry. The steel layoffs are part of an emerging pattern of deliberate sabotage of existing tractor manufacture essential to maintaining food production. The three major tractor producers, International Harvester, Deere, and Caterpillar, are all de-emphasizing farm equipment and reorienting production to heavy construction and earth-moving equipment tied to the still doubtful Rockefeller slave-labor development projects.

Workers in the Quad Cities area on the Illinois-Iowa border report that layoffs have already begun at International Harvester due to the partial closing of Gary Steelworks, the only producer of a special alloy used in the rear assembly of tractors. Inter-