

Farm Bureau adopts State Department line: slash farms to fit low demand

by Marcia Merry

The American Farm Bureau's 65th annual convention, meeting in Orlando, Florida this month, was the occasion for a decisive shift away from the Bureau politics-as-usual. These new policies, as spelled out in speeches and resolutions, did not arise from the ranks of the over 3 million members and families who belong to the Farm Bureau, but directly from the State Department and related think tanks, and the international food cartel companies, based in Switzerland, which are maneuvering to impose a "controlled collapse" of world population and food output rates.

The altered Farm Bureau policies, couched in terms of "supply and demand," call for eliminating many thousands of U.S. farms, drastically shrinking food output, reducing U.S. power supplies for agriculture and industry, and imposing severe austerity on the Third World through the International Monetary Fund. These radical changes were never circulated to local Farm Bureau organizations in advance of the meeting, and were passed, in a sheeplike convention atmosphere, which precluded countermotion.

Whereas, in recent years, the Farm Bureau's guest speakers, including President Reagan, have stressed the role of U.S. agriculture in "feeding the world," this convention presented only the heavy-handed State Department line of world austerity and trade war through the speeches of Secretary of Agriculture John Block and Undersecretary of State Kenneth Dam. The speeches of Rep. Thomas S. Foley (D-Wash.) and others provided no alternatives.

Block sees food glut

In his opening day presentation Secretary Block repeatedly implied that many farmers should expect to go out of business as a fact of life, which would be desirable as well as inevitable, because food supplies now exceed shrinking demand. He called for major reductions in crop acreage, praising the 1983 Payment in Kind (PIK) reduction of 82 million acres (20 percent of U.S. fields) and for a permanent end to farm income support mechanisms by 1985. Block justified

this perspective in the name of budget-cutting.

Using his customary "Haigspeak," Agriculture Secretary Block said, "I make the following observations just to background this exercise. The public I'm seeing today is going to demand that we reduce the cost of federal farm programs, certainly below the levels of 1982 and 1983, and I firmly believe that we should. We have a huge deficit, and we have to work to get it under control, and agriculture is going to have to do its part."

At his press conference Block smiled, "We're not trying to bankrupt farmers. . . we have a temporary food glut." He announced the formation of a cabinet-level commission on food and farm policy, to be headed by his undersecretary Richard Lyng, which will presumably be used to brainwash President Reagan himself on the food and hunger issue.

Most of the over 7,000 Farm Bureau members and friends in the audience listened to Block politely, although without applause at anticipated moments, because they are traditionally Republican in outlook, voted for Reagan, and came together hoping for some good news about the economy. By the second day, the mood had turned to anger as the full import of Block's remarks sank in.

State Department Deputy Secretary Kenneth Dam continued the theme Block had been programmed to present. Dam called for an end to national government intervention anywhere in the world to support their farm sectors and ensure food supplies—in other words, a total "free market." His arguments were exactly the same as those used by Block and developed by USDA chief agriculture economist William Leshner, which in turn repeat the views of the food trade cartels. He called for "world levels" of prices for farm commodities to prevail everywhere, and attacked the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP), the Japanese national farm support program, and Third World agriculture programs.

Farm price supports (for example, CAP price supports proposed for extension to Portugal and Spain) must be stopped. "Such price increases will almost certainly lead to dramatic

production increases as those farmers invest in irrigation, fertilizer and even new farming systems,” he said disapprovingly. Sounding like a spokesman for the 18th-century colonialist British East India Company, he called for the United States to use its “comparative advantage” in agriculture to vanquish all competitors in the farm export trade.

Dam’s outlook sounded extreme even to those members of the Farm Bureau who bullheadedly adhere to the myths that “free-market forces of supply and demand” determine prices, despite their knowledge that the world food trade today is dominated by a small cartel of about five major trade companies (Cargill, Bunge, Dreyfus, André and Continental) which controls 60 to 90 percent of all the world grain trade and price trends—and that meat, dairy products and other commodities are similarly controlled. Though many people at the convention may have previously espoused the Bureau ideology of reducing “big government” price support and other interventions, they now want government help to avert the loss of their own farms. Traditionally, the farm family members of the Farm Bureau are better established, with less debt, than other farmers, but the farm crisis is now hitting everyone.

According to the American Bankers Association, 55,000 farms went out of business in the United States in 1983; *EIR* estimates the figure to be significantly higher. At his press conference Block claimed, “We are gaining farmers”—referring to the increase of hippie farms and survival garden operations. Under orders from the State Department and the USDA, the Farmers Home Administration (the USDA farm loan agency) is moving to accelerate farm foreclosures, despite rearguard federal court efforts to restrain them. The impact of the farm bankruptcies and lack of production credit will mean food shortages appearing even in the United States itself by 1985.

Farm Bureau members saw this impending crisis most clearly in terms of defense preparedness for the nation. A press release titled “War Threat Requires Emergency Defense and Food Measures” was circulated to the convention by representatives of Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.’s presidential campaign. These measures called for federal executive orders to build up military preparedness and full production of food output. LaRouche was quoted: “Farmers, as patriots, know that we face a situation far graver than World War II,” and most of the 4,000 receiving the release agreed with the danger. Even Block, answering a LaRouche press representative, said, “We have to be prepared,” but then insisted, “There is no immediate threat.” Kenneth Dam, appearing on “Meet the Press” the day before the convention, maintained that the intentions of the Soviets must be regarded as good, because there is no way to know otherwise, and therefore we do not need to prepare for the worst.

Treasonous resolutions

The convention resolution changes show the influence of the State Department.

Resolution 527, on “National Farm Policy,” stated before alteration that there should be a “market-oriented farm policy” to allow farmers to take advantage of sales opportunities at home and abroad. The new section specifies: “A market-oriented agriculture means that supply and demand rather than government action should ultimately determine production and prices. Toward that end, government-subsidized farm commodity programs should be phased out after the 1985 crop year. . . . Price support loan levels for all commodities should be established below world market prices as a means of ensuring price competitiveness for U.S. agriculture commodities.”

Resolution 504 on the Executive Branch of federal government calls for unprecedented legislation “to provide the position of an Undersecretary of State for Agriculture Affairs within the State Department.” Given the character of the State Department since especially Kissinger’s time there, this new position would do nothing else than facilitate the use of food “as a weapon” in foreign relations.

Resolution 526, on the World Bank, begins, “We recommend that the charter for the World Bank and its companion institution, the International Monetary Fund, be reviewed by Congress to determine if these institutions are operating according to their original purpose and in keeping with sound banking practice. It was augmented to state: “We oppose any moratorium of principle [sic] or interest on loans made by the International Monetary Fund.” The Farm Bureau’s national office, against the wishes of thousands of members, this year backed the congressional bail-out to the IMF of \$8.4 billion.

Resolution 640, on “Electric Power Generation,” had previously read, “We support an accelerated program for building nuclear power plants and for reprocessing. . . .” This was replaced with the opposite view: “We support the use of existing nuclear power generators, including those under construction, as a source of needed energy with adequate safeguards to ensure its safe and environmentally sound use. We do not support the development of any additional nuclear electric generating facilities at this time.”

The Indiana and Michigan Farm Bureau delegations led a fight against this proposal.

There were companion changes throughout the set of 675 resolutions, down to such details as deleting the name of the Washington, D.C.-based Institute for Policy Studies, which had previously been rightly condemned as one of those “self-appointed public policy groups who seek basic changes in our political and economic system.” Is an IPS member running the show in the Farm Bureau now?