

Agriculture by Marcia Merry

Top farm fag kicks bucket

Dick Hanson, dead of AIDS, was a typical "New Age" member of the Democratic National Committee.

On July 23, Minnesota farm activist Dick Hanson died of AIDS. He had been part of the "new wave" of protest leaders, politics, and a member of the Democratic National Committee.

Hanson's political life is a textbook case of the "liberal farm activist" whose "protests" are dedicated to ensuring that nothing effective is done to change the policies destroying the American farm sector. Over the years, he participated in "rural campaigns" against the Vietnam War, nuclear power, and long-distance power transmission lines. He stood for "alternative agriculture" pursuits, such as local-only marketing.

Hanson's personal life was a textbook case of the spiritual impoverishment that comes from "alternative lifestyles" based on an anti-science approach. (His own farm in Glenwood, in notoriously poor condition, was reduced to a mere 40 of the 473 acres he had inherited from his family.)

Hanson lived on the farm for the past five years with his boyfriend, Bert Henningson, a teacher at the University of Minnesota-Morris. Both found they had AIDS in 1985—to Hanson's professed shock. He thought he was "safe," having given up going to the homosexual bathhouse in Minneapolis several years ago. He was hospitalized several times in 1986, and after one bout with pneumonia in August, he told the press, "I had an out-of-body experience there, and even

thought I had died for a time."

Politically, Hanson was active with Democratic Party politics and led campaigns for Eugene McCarthy, George McGovern, and Jesse Jackson. He was a vocal member of the gay and feminist caucuses within the Minnesota Democratic Farmer Labor Party, and in 1980, was elected one of the first openly homosexual members of the National Democratic Committee. Hanson was chairman of his local DFL district.

In September last year, he was honored at a fundraising dinner, whose sponsors included Gov. Rudy Perpich, Lt. Gov. Marlene Johnson, St. Paul Mayor George Latimer, Minneapolis Mayor Don Fraser, and Congressmen Bruce Vento and Martin Sabo. Entertainment included folk singer Larry Long playing songs on a medicine man's "healing flute," and the formation of a "faith circle" of friends to impart strength.

Hanson participated in various "alternative" agriculture organizations, and was a founder of the "Groundswell" group a few years ago, whose program consists of "non-violent protest" against farm foreclosures.

His career exemplifies every tenet of the policies of the Ford Foundation, the Field Foundation, the Stern Foundation, and the Institute for Policy Studies. Hanson spent his adult life working for the oligarchical interests represented by the grain cartel (Cargill et al.)

Operating on the policy devised by the Benedictines at the highest level, the liberal foundations, the National Council of Churches, and the Hollywood/Nashville group "FarmAID" have poured money into the activities of groups and individuals like Hanson's Groundswell, typical of a whole network dedicated to presenting an "aura of concern" for the plight of the farm family, while ensuring that nothing effective is done to change Washington's cartel-supplied policy of destroying the family-farm system in the United States.

The cartel interests, which underpay farmers, monopolize food exports and imports, and prevent any emergency debt relief for farmers, are now overseeing a shift from the independent farm-based economy to a neo-feudalist system of big-money, corporate farm ownership, for which ex-independents will work as no better than tenant farmers.

Later this year, delegations of Soviet writers and agriculture "experts" will be touring Iowa to speak about man's mystical relationship to the soil. Minnesota, where Hanson was active, has traditionally supplied a political channel to Moscow, through the Hubert Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota, which provided Walter Mondale with his Kremlin-approved program, for example.

Incidentally, Dick Hanson's watchword, which he wore on his t-shirt, was "Peace and Agriculture," which he viewed as the perspective of his group, Groundswell. *Groundswell*, incidentally, is the name of a famous book, published in 1965 by the Soviet intelligence service, on the subject of espionage activities in the West by "The Trust," the special arrangement Moscow has with powerful Western financier interests, typified by Cargill.