

Emergency measures for drought, food crisis

The following points summarize a resolution calling for emergency measures to lessen the damage from the current drought, and to restore the agriculture sector of the nation to a condition of expanding food output. This resolution was put in circulation in mid-June 1988, by the National Democratic Policy Committee, and variations of the program have been ratified in different forms by civic, political, and farm groups across the country.

In June, the state convention of the Nebraska Democratic Party mandated sending a similar resolution to the state congressional delegation, after the statement was passed by the convention resolutions committee. In Pennsylvania, George Elder, Democratic Party congressional candidate in the Erie area, has called for emergency measures of this type. Without specifying every measure, the resolution implies the use of all-out war-logistics-type approaches to marshal and allocate food—for example, food irradiation, military-assisted food storage and shipping, and so forth.

WHEREAS drought conditions threaten to drastically reduce crop and livestock output in 1988-89. . . ;

WHEREAS world food reserves are at inadequate, low levels. . . ;

WHEREAS the food output potential of the U.S. farm-belt has drastically declined in the last 10 years of high interest rates, low farm prices and food cartel company maneuvers, so that thousands of farmers have been dispossessed, remaining farms are in poor condition, and farm supply lines and services discontinued—farm machinery, transportation, etc.;

WHEREAS the USDA has systematically overstated the amount and condition of U.S. foodstocks;

WHEREAS a select group of food companies has moved to dominate food supplies in the U.S. and abroad, under the current conditions of declining food output;

WHEREAS multimillions more tons of food are required to upgrade nutrition levels for millions of people, especially in the face of the AIDS threat, and the spread of other diseases;

WHEREAS farmers need parity-related price levels, in

order to withstand and make reparations for the effects of the drought;

WHEREAS the designs and engineering exist for large-scale water projects such as NAWAPA which could permanently eliminate damage from occasional adverse weather;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1) This body petitions the federal government to order the immediate suspension of all grain exports until the amount of stocks available in the United States can be ascertained.

2) This body petitions to urge the establishment of an Independent Commission of Inquiry to conduct an immediate national audit of U.S. grain stocks, to specify both the amount of grain stocks available and the location and condition of the stocks.

3) This body further petitions the federal government to assure that grain exports recommence, if at all, only after the findings of such an Independent Commission are reviewed.

4) This body petitions the federal government to negotiate with the government of Canada to begin construction of NAWAPA, the North American Water and Power Alliance, which would divert McKenzie and Yukon River waters from their present northward course, downstream to the south, through the Rocky Mountain trench, with waterways all the way to northern Mexico. NAWAPA provides a plan to construct vast new irrigation and barge canal routes in the western United States, reverse the depletion of the Ogallala Aquifer, alleviate dependence on the Colorado River system, and to regulate and replenish the Great Lakes, St. Lawrence, and Missouri-Mississippi systems. Canada would receive the bulk of the created hydroelectric capacity, 56 million acre feet of water, and a massively upgraded canal system. . . .

5) This body petitions the federal government to put a stay on all farm foreclosures, pending new credit arrangements. . . .

6) This body petitions the federal government that all means of drought relief be set forth and implemented, to include the use of federal set-aside and Conservation Reserve Program acreage for emergency grazing and forage purposes; a program of guaranteed funding for re-seeding; using grants, low-interest and no-interest loans; staying of farm loan obligations and federal commodity program obligations, until the emergency period is officially declared over. Grants and transportation and access-assistance for livestock feed, well drilling, and other measures shall be determined as required.

7) This body further petitions that a program for expanding food output be set forth and implemented, to include measures of "commissioning" increased crop and livestock output determined by committees of collaborating farmers, following the 1940s example of the War Mobilization Board.

8) This body further petitions that all relevant local, state, and federal agencies move to establish parity-related farm pricing, and move to initiate anti-trust action against food cartel companies now dominating pricing and food-trade flows.