

## Agriculture by Marcia Merry

### The Bush pesticide bill

*The EPA's new federal food safety bills follow the "green agenda" to drastically cut U.S. food production.*

Amidst great fanfare on Oct. 26, President Bush and William K. Reilly, head of the Environmental Protection Agency, released a draft bill on food safety, setting new regulations for the use of pesticides in farming, and the presence of residues in food.

Prior to the Bush bill came the Food Safety Assurance Act (H.R. 3292), introduced earlier in October by House Agriculture Committee Chairman Kika de la Garza (D-Tex.) and fellow committee members.

On the occasion of the announcement of the new administration bill, media magpies were all screeching about how the bill didn't go far enough to allow states to restrict the use of chemicals in farming and foods.

What's all the fuss about? Are people falling dead in the streets from unsafe food?

Just the opposite. There is not enough food, safe or otherwise, for all the people in this nation nor for millions abroad. People are becoming sick and are dying from lack of food—not from unsafe food.

These new food bills, and all the media fuss, are part of a "greenie" environmentalist blueprint on how to divert public attention from the domestic and international food crisis, which is worsening by the day.

Congress, the administration and the media are following a script, practically word for word, laid out in documents from the radical ecology lobby, such as the book, *Alternative Agriculture*, released in September by the National Research Council (National Academy of Sciences). The "issues"

set by this book—endorsed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture—are that farmers around the world must forego today's "conventional" farm orientation to producing plentiful, wholesome food, and instead must switch to "alternative" low-energy, low-technology farming, to protect the environment, and to produce less, but "purer" food.

"Less" food is genocide. Worldwide, less grain has been produced than consumed annually for three years in a row. Grain stocks have been drawn down to below danger levels. Domestically, stocks of dairy foods and other vital products are inadequate. Farmers are being driven off the land.

The "pure food" craze has been initiated and is funded by the major international commodities and banking cartel interests who are prepared to see millions die to protect their own perceived financial interests. This circle operates through a front of ecology groups, paid to rant and rave about food safety and the environment.

One of the sponsors of the *Alternative Agriculture* book is the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. When the book was released Sept. 7, its authors stated that most farm chemicals are used only for "cosmetic" reasons on fruits and vegetables—not against pests—and can be eliminated. This is untrue. The authors also imply that the use of pesticides per se is hazardous to human health. This is also untrue. But truth and consequences do not matter to the media or lawmakers.

The new Bush bill streamlines

procedures needed to remove an agricultural chemical from the market from the current four to eight years, down to two years. EPA head Reilly said, "We suspend trading in a bad stock quicker than we suspend a pesticide."

The reception to this bill in the media was to attack it for not going much further to ban farm chemicals. The Bush bill prohibits states from passing more stringent rules on pesticide use and presence, than the federal government specifies. Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) said, "I believe the states should have the right to set tougher standards on pesticides."

Several states, especially California, New York, and Massachusetts, have been moving toward stronger rules than the ones proposed by Washington, D.C.

Another issue under dispute in this "greener than thou" debate among policymakers is the permissible level of detectable chemicals in food. The President's plan sets a single standard of "negligible risk" for assessing alleged cancer dangers in raw and processed foods. The EPA is to interpret this by guidelines based on the latest scientific findings. Federal authorities also have the discretion to okay a pesticide if economic and health considerations offset a risk from the substance that exceeds the "negligible risk" criterion.

Therefore, this is another bone of contention among those wanting to strike a good greenie pose on the pure foods issue. Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) and Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) recently introduced a bill that would set an extreme standard about pesticide residue, and would allow no consideration of its economic impact on farmers who are to provide food in the future.