

## Agriculture by Marcia Merry

### Big cuts in store for USDA

*To save money? No. The purpose is to give cartel companies free rein for food control.*

On April 8, U.S. Agriculture Secretary Edward Madigan announced he will close and consolidate hundreds of field offices of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and cut back many other USDA operations.

Speaking at a hearing before the House Agriculture Committee, Madigan said that he has asked the state directors of three USDA agencies with thousands of field offices to justify the need to keep each one open, or to recommend changes. After he reviews their findings, Madigan said, "I plan to proceed by closing and consolidating those offices that can no longer be justified."

The three agencies are the Agriculture Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS), the Farmers Home Mortgage Administration (FmHA), and the Soil Conservation Service (SCS). The ASCS has until the end of April to get its report to Madigan. The deadline for the other two agencies, FmHA and SCS, has not been announced.

At a press conference, Madigan reported that 179 ASCS field offices cost more in overhead than they handle in USDA program funds (price supports, disaster aid, etc.). Thus, this sweeping cutback is billed by USDA top officials as a cost-saving move. Certain major media have chimed in with the message that the USDA is costly, corrupt, dangerous, duplicitous, etc.

Right on cue, members of Congress, in particular Sen. Richard Lugar (R-Ind.), have joined the chorus calling for cuts. On April 8, Lugar

cited 92 USDA field offices where costs exceed funds disbursed.

Yet the Government Accounting Office reports that axing these offices would save only \$90 million. Over half the USDA annual budget of \$50 billion-plus goes for food relief; \$2 billion goes for field offices, and very little goes to support farmers.

What's the real story behind the sudden cost-consciousness? The simple truth is that the cartel company interests that have dominated USDA policy for decades now are moving to sweep aside even those institutions that have willingly served cartel interests over the public good.

Such companies as Cargill, Inc., and its cohorts Archer Daniels Midland (ADM), ConAgra, Continental, Louis Dreyfus, Bunge, and a few others, have been repositioning themselves throughout the United States, Canada, and Mexico for near-total control of production, processing, prices, and shipments of food in North America. In the cartels' schemes, many USDA functions such as border customs control, sanitation inspection, nutrition standards, and especially maintaining the family farm, are in the way.

Therefore, any and all agencies serving these interests are in line to be axed, or made into outright taxpayer-supported adjuncts of the cartel companies. The design of the cartels is to control food flows—including who farms and who doesn't, and who eats and who doesn't, through one integrated cartel network in North America. In order to implement that scheme, the following

measures are under way:

- Transportation grid: Southern Pacific Rail Lines, bordering Mexico, and Burlington Northern, bordering Canada, and related ports and food handling facilities are being reorganized for cartel cross-border operations. House Agriculture Committee Chairman Kika de la Garza (D-Tex.) is spearheading cartel demands to eliminate border impediments to Mexico-U.S. trucking flows.

- Inspection control: Regulations governing inspection of meat and other foodstuffs in Mexico, the U.S., and Canada are being changed to meet cartel desires.

- Food types: USDA standards for recommended daily amounts for consumption of animal proteins and other high-quality foods are being scrapped to serve cartel interests (such as ADM) in monopolizing vegetable matter such as meat substitutes and soy milk. To further these changes, cartel company officials are directly coordinating the attack on the USDA.

Take the case of the *Kansas City Star*. From Dec. 8 to Dec. 14, 1991, the *Star* ran a daily series of lengthy attacks on the USDA, charging that it is sexist or white male-dominated; that the USDA meat inspectors approve contaminated beef, from which children can get cerebral palsy; that the USDA gives windfall handouts to "phantom farmers"; that the USDA allows farmers to drain wetlands, etc.

But look who owns the *Star*—Capital Cities/ABC, based in New York. A major owner of this media conglomerate is Warren Buffett, who is also on the board of ADM.

Already, ADM receives billions of federal subsidies for manufacture of ethanol, a proposed substitute for gasoline, from corn. But this swindle is nowhere attacked in the *Star*, nor in fact in any national media.