

## Agriculture by Marcia Merry

### No friend of the farmer or the hungry

*The Hudson Institute says we can produce more food, but it is backing cartel demands for free trade.*

**T**here is a contrived debate being staged, aimed at public opinion and conducted through the media, on Capitol Hill, and through pseudo-scientific journals, that poses the question: Can the world's population feed itself?

The real food crisis that we face is that the world economic depression is destroying essential infrastructure and ruining family farmers, to the point that agricultural output potential is being destroyed globally, placing the world on the path to famine. What is required is an emergency mobilization to reverse destruction of the physical economy and produce more food at increasing rates of yield.

Instead, there are political and financial interests backing cynical, incompetent position-taking on the so-called food issue, while they move privately to maintain policies of food and population control.

The contrived arguments are that 1) population should be cut because the natural resource base and technology limits for the earth's "carrying capacity" for humans has been reached; and, its pseudo-opposite, that 2) wonders expected from agricultural biotechnology will be the basis for billions more people, as long as free trade and "comparative advantage" prevail globally.

We refuted the first argument in the last issue of *EIR* (March 18), in a review of a recently released book, *State of the World 1994*, by the most publicized advocate of this viewpoint, Lester Brown, founder and director of the Washington, D.C.-based Worldwatch Institute. Brown claims that

world resource limits for agriculture have been so exceeded, that governments should be required to eliminate their "unsupportable" people.

What is the alternative? "Billions more people can easily be fed," says the Hudson Institute, the loyal opposition to Worldwatch, Brown, et al. But a look at a recent Hudson Institute conference shows what a sham their pro-population, pro-technology position is.

Called "The Greatest Opportunity in Farming History," the conference was held in Indianapolis, Indiana, the headquarters of the Hudson Institute since it moved from New York, where it was founded in 1961 by Herman Kahn, known as "mega-death" Kahn for his advocacy of the usefulness of nuclear war. The official host groups were the Competitiveness Center and the Center for Global Food Issues of the Hudson Institute.

The financial sponsors of the conference included food cartel companies now dominating food processing and trade and, since at least the late 1970s, the policies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture: Cargill, Inc., ConAgra, Sunkist, AGP Cooperative, Inc., Countrymark Cooperative, Inc., DowElanco, Miles Laboratories, and others.

The theme of the conference was that free trade must be expanded (beyond even the North American Free Trade Agreement and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, or GATT), which, it was argued, will allow international "competition" in farming, through which, from interventions of selected biotechnological

and other high-tech inputs, plenty of food will be produced for future billions of people. Believe that, and we'll shovel you some more.

The conference keynote, "American Agriculture as a Growth Opportunity," by former Vice President Dan Quayle, called free trade the friend of the U.S. farmer.

So much for the propaganda. What about the reality?

The world loss of farmers, drop in output, decline in infrastructure (e.g., lack of repairs and expansion of the upper Mississippi levees and river improvements), and increase in starvation and malnutrition all show concretely the disaster of free trade. Yet, the speakers at the conference—Paul Faeth, economist from the World Resources Institute; Dean Kleckner, head of the American Farm Bureau; and many former USDA officials—all made special pleas for the food cartel's right to operate outside national controls.

The biotechnology propaganda is an even more transparent hoax. The technology itself, for genetic intervention in plant and animal life, is beneficial. However, what the Hudson Institute crowd is backing are sweeping patent rights and exclusive "intellectual property" rights, to be enforced under the GATT Uruguay Round, to control innovations in food and fiber from seed to table.

For example, the cartel company W.R. Grace, in October 1992, received patent rights to all genetically engineered cotton, of any type, by any means, produced in the United States until the year 2008. Grace is thus entitled to a royalty on any plant or seed of genetically engineered cotton, the fourth highest value U.S. crop, no matter how the genetic matter was introduced or by whom. Similarly, Monsanto has a sweeping patent for engineered wheat.