

U.N. says food shortage caused by 'too many people'

by Marcia Merry Baker

"The Quebec Declaration" on world food security is in the works for release by the United Nations in early November, from its Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) based in Rome, which is observing the 50th anniversary of its founding on Oct. 16, 1995, in Quebec City.

A draft text of the resolution, provided to this news service, shows that, as expected, it continues the rhetoric and role of the U.N. to "talk food," while whole nations of millions of people have been forced into food import dependence, especially during the past 25-30 years, and now the food is not there. One of most dramatic, current examples is Russia, where the 1995 grains harvest may come in at merely 65 million tons—the lowest in decades, and way below minimum consumption needs.

This process of forced food import dependence has been done in the name of "free trade," and enforced by FAO sister organizations, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, also founded 50 years ago. Today's food dependence is exactly analogous to the politically enforced food dependence of the population living along the littoral of the Mediterranean Sea in the 1300-1500s, when Venetian merchant vessels controlled grain trade routes, and held cities hostage by withholding food offshore until demands were met.

Today, an interlocking web of grain and other basic food commodity companies constitutes a global cartel—mostly Anglo-Dutch-Swiss, some of whose corporate pedigrees date back to centuries-old Venetian interests. The private "big money" families and circles associated with this cartel, and generally London financial interests, have been moving heavily into ownership of scarce food stocks, processing, and storage facilities, as part of their rush into commodities ownership (precious metals, minerals, etc.), to try to save

themselves through hoarding and speculating during the coming, inevitable blowout of the world financial system.

The famous names involved in this, to take grains as an example, are (giving the rough percentage control of world cereals trade): Cargill Inc. (25%), ADM/Toepfer (20%), Continental (13%), Louis Dreyfus (13%), Bunge (12%), Pillsbury (owned by London-based Grand Metropolitan, 4%), Marc Rich and other dealers (4%).

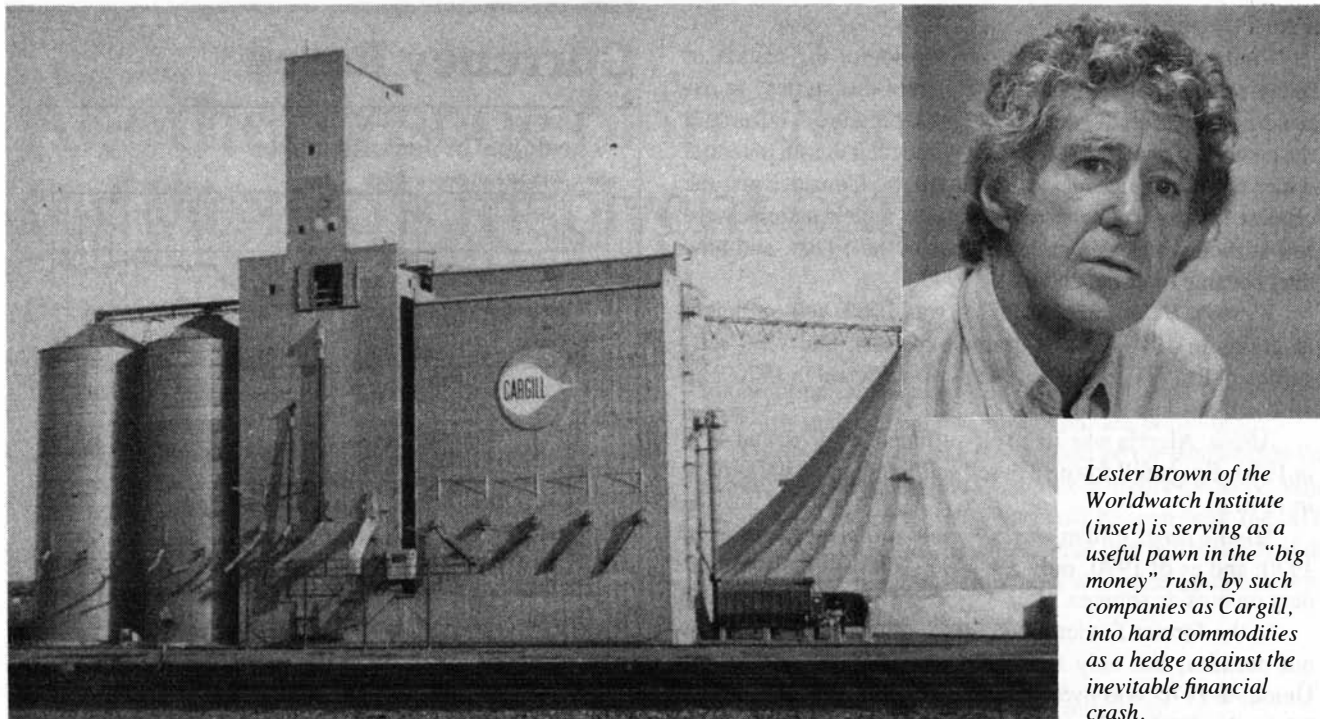
At chosen food-producing regions around the world, these companies have moved in to buy up key links of the food chain—grain elevators, barge lines, rail depots, processing plants; and to bankrupt opposing interests.

FAO themes

None of these names, nor actions, will be identified in Quebec City, of course, according to the plans for the celebrations and fanfare at the 50-year commemoration. The themes of the Oct. 13-16 conference, and the pre-meeting symposium on Oct. 11-13, carry on those priorities of the U.N. World conferences on the environment in Rio de Janeiro (1993) and on population in Cairo (1994). The approved viewpoints are that: 1) low-tech agriculture practices are the only environmentally friendly methods; 2) producing less food is the only "sustainable" economic activity under the circumstances; 3) therefore, population reduction is a necessity.

The FAO hopes to have 1,500 representatives at a symposium of sessions on such matters, advertised as focused on case studies from five continents, to demonstrate ways of "managing natural resources, managing markets, and managing know-how and technology."

The attendees are expected to be representatives from the ranks of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), various food and agriculture experts, and, the FAO invitations stress,



Lester Brown of the Worldwatch Institute (inset) is serving as a useful pawn in the "big money" rush, by such companies as Cargill, into hard commodities as a hedge against the inevitable financial crash.

business. "Innovative solutions" and "business contacts" are stressed in the invitations.

What about the question of world food shortages? There is everything else on the agenda for the whole Quebec City October gala, *except* the matter of emergency economic measures that should be undertaken to assist nations to restore agriculture infrastructure and output potential.

What we can expect to see, is hand-wringing over hunger, and publicity on how short world food stocks and harvests are, issued such in a way as to feed no one but the interests of the high finance hoarders.

1996 world food summit

The October Quebec anniversary events are preliminary to a U.N. world food summit, planned for November 1996. Plans are to continue the policies first publicized at the last U.N. world food summit, in 1974 in Rome. Earlier that year, the U.N. hosted a population conference in Budapest, to issue the demand that world population growth be stopped; then, in November, 1974, the U.N. hosted the World Food Conference, with the featured speaker being U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, one of the most notorious advocates of the use of food as a political weapon. Publicly, Kissinger used soft talk about eliminating hunger; but privately, he was busy in 1974, preparing the U.S. National Security Strategy Memorandum 200 (NSSM 200), which mandated food warfare against specified nations whose populations were growing too quickly.

The backers of these U.N. conferences, and of Kissinger, were centered in London-based financial and commodity in-

terests, acting through such funding agencies as the Rockefeller Foundation. Another operation of theirs in 1974, was to create a new "authority" for propaganda on food and resources. This led to the founding in Washington, D.C. of the Worldwatch Institute, and the beginning of the career of one Lester Brown—a protégé of Orville Freeman, from Minnesota, and formerly U.S. Agriculture Secretary in the 1960s, and a lifelong servant of cartel commodity interests.

Lester Brown is expected to be the keynote speaker at the Quebec City FAO event. In press releases over the summer, Brown decries food and harvest shortages, and asserts that they show the impossibility of producing enough food to feed everyone. In his June 9, "Worldwatch Vital Signs Brief 95-1: World Grain Stocks Dropping to All-Time Low," he concludes: "Making it to the next harvest, a concern ever since agriculture began, is now re-emerging as a major concern of many governments today. The tightening of the market now under way could mark the conversion of the buyers' market of the last half century to a sellers' market. Competition among exporting countries for markets that never seemed large enough may be replaced by competition among importers for exportable supplies that never seem adequate.

"This decline in world grain stocks and the growing difficulty in expanding both oceanic and land-based food output underlines the importance of stabilizing world population growth sooner rather than later. It adds to the urgency of implementing the World Population Plan of Action adopted at Cairo last September. Achieving an acceptable balance between food and people now may be more dependent on family planners than on fishermen and farmers."

Food dependence

Contrary to Brown's self-serving logic, the causes of today's food shortages are not "inherent difficulties" in expanding food output, nor "population pressure," but rather the takedown of national economies and their output potential under the recent decades of the IMF era. Consider just the crudest measure of this: the degree to which nations were self-sufficient in basic grains output in the 1970s, and how they became food-dependent by 1990.

Western Hemisphere: Mexico was 106% self-sufficient in grains in 1970 (i.e., a grains exporter); and 73% self-sufficient in 1991. Haiti was 94% self-sufficient in 1970; and 46% self-sufficient in 1990.

Africa: Algeria was 76% self-sufficient in 1970; and 44% in 1990. Egypt fell from 73% self-sufficient in 1970, to 63% in 1990.

Middle East: Jordan was 33% self-sufficient in grains in 1970; and as of 1990, only 3%—i.e., almost totally dependent on outside sources.

In the former Soviet bloc region, this process has taken not decades, but only five years. As a whole, the Soviet Union, in 1970, was over 90% self-sufficient in grains output for its needs, though with livestock feeding problems, and other limitations. By the mid-1980s, this self-sufficiency had dropped to 85% at best. From 1990 to the present, the grains output of this region has dropped to the point of catastrophe. For example, the average annual grains harvest in the Russia Federation was between 110-115 million tons in the 1980s. In 1992, it dropped to 101 million tons; in 1993, down to 94 million tons; in 1994, down to 77 million tons.

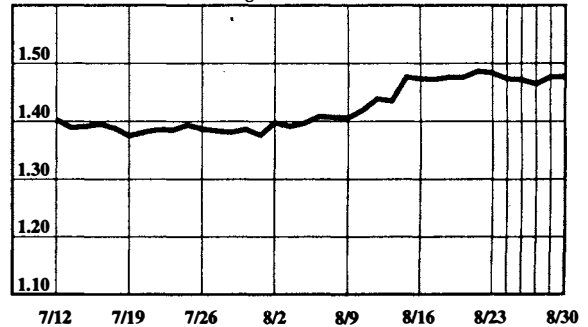
This year, the Russian grain harvest may fall to 65 million tons. The solution for Russia, and all the CIS republics, is the same needed on every continent: To initiate emergency measures for the present, and to restore longer-term infrastructure building, and production of the inputs required to expand agricultural output potential. In the newspaper *Trud* on Aug. 26, commenting on the disastrous grain harvest, Russian Vice Premier A. Zaveryukha and Agriculture Minister A. Nazarchuk both noted that Siberia is potentially capable of feeding the whole of Russia. The problem here, as elsewhere, however, is lack of equipment. "The work load per combine in Altay [south of Novosibirsk] this year is in excess of 500 hectares. That is, crop losses are inevitable."

As against this reality, "The Quebec Declaration" on the FAO's 50th anniversary is just more despicable U.N. doublespeak on food. It notes "with satisfaction the progress made globally with respect to these objectives [ensuring the 1945 goals of freedom from hunger, expanding the world economy and raising nutrition levels] over the past 50 years." The declaration calls for action in three areas: "I. Promoting agriculture, forestry and fisheries as key sectors in the quest for sustainable economic development; II. Empowering food producers and consumers; III. Making sustainable use of natural resources for development."

Currency Rates

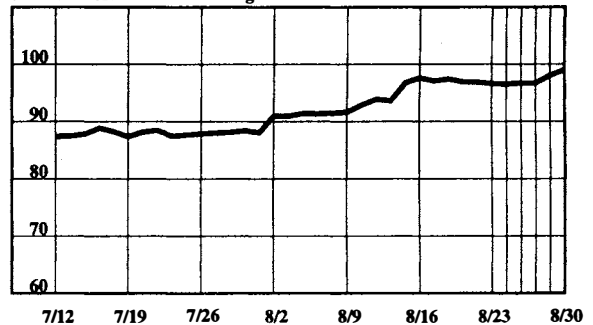
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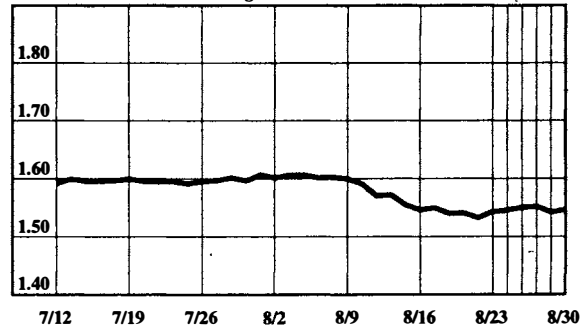
The dollar in yen

New York late afternoon fixing



The British pound in dollars

New York late afternoon fixing



The dollar in Swiss francs

New York late afternoon fixing

