

Agriculture by Robert L. Baker

Yeutter's 5% wheat land set-aside

It may seem to help relieve world grain shortages, but a closer look shows the same genocidal policy.

On June 1, Secretary of Agriculture Clayton Yeutter again announced a land set-aside requirement for wheat farmers to enroll in the 1990 farm income support program. This time, the amount of wheat land set-aside farmers must idle to be enrolled in the 1990 farm program is being lowered from 27.5% in 1988, to 10% in 1989, down to 5% of total wheat base acreage for 1990.

This may seem like an act to help relieve world grain shortages, but when you look behind various camouflage techniques, the 1990 wheat acreage set aside is 13.4% of the base wheat acreage this country had in 1985. This continues the genocide policy of the Trilateral Commission, for whom Clayton Yeutter co-authored a blueprint for food reduction in 1985.

With a total U.S. wheat base acreage projected to be 82.4 million acres, a 5% set-aside of that land in 1990, will take 4.08 million acres of wheat land out of production. If these set-aside acres averaged 35 bushels per acre and each bushel provided 70 one-pound loaves of bread (or equivalent wheat-based food product), this idled land would furnish one loaf of bread per day for an entire year for 27.5 million hungry or starving people.

This loss cannot be tolerated. The government has forecast an 8% drop in the winter wheat crop (winter wheat is planted in the fall, and harvested in the early summer) this year and U.S. wheat stocks are dangerously low. But due to drought, windburn, and other factors, a 37% yield decline is projected for wheat in Kansas, the nation's leading wheat state, its smallest

crop in two decades. There will be a 19% reduction in Oklahoma, 32% reduction in Texas, 11% in Colorado, 36% in Washington and 25% in Montana.

Among the advocates of increased planting are the Independent Bakers Association. Lower wheat supplies and higher prices will increase food prices for U.S. consumers and force into malnourishment millions of Americans dependent on donated food. For consumers in poor countries, scarce world grain supplies mean high prices and starvation.

"There's a world shortage of good quality baking flour," says Robert Pyle, president of the Independent Bakers Association. The Kansas Wheat Commission says the crop has worsened since the survey was taken. William O. Tierney, agricultural extension economist at Kansas State University, sees as too high the USDA's recent World Board projection of slightly more than 2 billion bushels for all U.S. wheat this year.

On May 11, the USDA estimated the nation's 1989 winter wheat harvest at 1.43 billion bushels, the smallest crop since 1978. The USDA also projected the spring wheat crop will total 620 million bushels, for a total of 2.05 billion bushels. Washington, D.C. crop consultant John Schnittker thinks this is too high. Criticizing USDA for overestimating supplies, Schnittker believes wheat supplies will more than likely fall below USDA projections by 300 million bushels. This is why no land set-aside should occur and maximum planting should take place.

Even taking the USDA's crop es-

timate of 2.05 billion bushels, the U.S. will not produce enough wheat to meet American and foreign demand, projected at 2.16 billion bushels. The USDA admits American farmers will grow too little wheat to supply its current foreign customers, so exports must be cut by 310 million bushels. If Schnittker's assumptions are correct, even full production next year would not make up the wheat shortfall. Under current USDA policy, there is no question of who will get grain exports. The Soviet Union is receiving record shipments of grain this year, while North African nations and other points of need are being cut back.

Besides the annual cropland set-aside program (for rice, wheat, corn, and the coarse grains), the 1985 Food Security Act of 1985, set up a new, unprecedented program to take land out of food production: the Conservation Reserve Program. Because of CRP, the wheat base that the USDA talks about today is much smaller than the wheat base of 1985. In 1985 the wheat base was 92 million acres. This has been reduced by 9.6 million acres to 82.4 million acres. Most of this reduction, 7.1 million acres, has been enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program and is locked out of production for ten years.

The sum of the 7.1 million acres of wheat base locked out of production in the Conservation Reserve Program, and the 4.08 million acre set-aside from the 1990 farm program, increases the real wheat set-aside acreage for 1990 from 5% to 13.4%. Thus the confusing intricacies involving the various parts of the current farm program, camouflage the many ways that cropland is being taken out of production. In the U.S., the amount of wheat acreage idled from 1986 through 1988 has totaled 96.1 million acres, which is 30% more than the 74.3 million acres of wheat planted by American farmers in 1989.