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## Farmers, Eaters Report

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# The crisis of U.S. food production

"How can you feed someone when you don't have it? How can you clothe people, when there is no wool, no cotton being produced?" So asked **Carolyn Campbell**, director of the second-largest food bank service in the United States. Campbell's agency is located in Fresno, California—heart of one of the richest agricultural regions in the world. Yet today, in the lush Central Valley, hunger is on the increase, alongside farms in crisis.

Campbell participated in a Food for Peace conference panel on Nov. 4, called "Collapse of Physical Production of Food," sharing the podium with farmers from abroad, and with U.S. spokesmen Lindsey Williams, noted author and lecturer on the economic crisis, and Phil Valenti, Pennsylvania Food for Peace coordinator. Their presentations and other conference remarks by farm leaders such as Jack Hall, former president of the Virginia state National Farmers Union, give a graphic picture of how two decades of disastrous policy have created the present burgeoning farm and food crisis in the United States. The speakers were unanimous in the view that the situation could be reversed if the right emergency measures were taken. Campbell said, "Except we come together all over the world, we cannot succeed."

Campbell reported that in 1979, the Fresno Food Bank provided 800 families with monthly provisions. In 1989, that number increased by 300% to 3,200 families. The food bank serves laid-off factory workers as well as migrant farm laborers, families, plus hundreds of others dispossessed by the "Great Recovery" of the 1980s. Campbell described the succession of government actions over the past 10 years. In 1982, for example, then Agriculture Secretary John Block came to visit California. Even then, one could see that agriculture was in



crisis. In 1983, President Reagan signed the "Jobs Stimulus" bill. Campbell remarked, "As far as I am concerned, it did not meet the necessities of the poor." For example, at one point, Sperry-New Holland, the farm equipment manufacturer, closed three plants in Fresno. Suddenly, hundreds of newly unemployed needed help. The food bank and another local relief agency, the Center la Familia, were the chief sources of assistance.

Yet the food bank itself is in an intense financial squeeze. In addition to the rapid growth in local needs, the costs of relief have increased dramatically: In the early 1980s, the program paid 12¢ a pound for food provisions; today, it must lay out 25¢ for the same amount.

Interests connected to the private food cartel companies have hampered the food bank's efforts. In one case, raisins, unsold on the produce market, were being offered for hog feed for only \$45 a ton. Yet incredibly, the Fresno Food Bank was prevented from buying them for the poor. In another case, there used to exist the "Senior Gleaners," a group that went out into the fields and orchards to pick up the remaining fruits and vegetables after the farm harvesting was done. But, three years ago, the farmers were ordered to plough under their crop remainders, to "protect" their market prices. There are even "shakers," who are paid to go around and shake the lingering fruit from the trees so it falls to the ground and rots. Campbell said, "These are horror stories, but very real."

### Debt engulfs production

**Lindsey Williams**, known widely for his first book, *The Energy Non-Crisis*, described how he and his wife traveled for four months among farmers, gathering facts on the farm and food crisis for his book *Where's the Food?* He said, "You would think it was Siberia, not here."



"I traveled in North Dakota . . . no cattle herds. We do not have the beef anymore on American soil. If imports are cut off," he said, there would be no food. He reported on the empty grain elevators in the Northwest, noting with tongue-in-cheek naiveté, "I thought we had a surplus."

Williams outlined the "design-plan" at work to destroy farmers. He pointed out that the largest farm in Argentina is owned by the Rockefellers. Rockefeller ships take Argentine wheat into the United States. This is happening because Argentina must pay debt to Chase Manhattan Bank (Rockefeller again) in U.S. dollars, which the Argentines can earn only through exports. He said that February 1988 was "a point of no return" for the world economy, because there was more

debt to be paid than assets with which to pay it.

Williams posed the question, "What is true wealth?" He answered, "The tangible objects God has created . . . land"; several in the audience were heard to murmur in reply, "the mind." He ended by advising some "cures" for the situation. he said, "Attempt to get out of debt. . . . Beware of usury. . . . Set family priorities. . . . Get involved in government . . . take responsibility for your health." He said, "Stand up to your adversity. Either you stand up for something, or you fall for anything."

## Urban-rural alliance

**Phil Valenti**, Pennsylvania Food for Peace spokesman, described the gains from concrete actions over the past few months by a coalition of "farmers and eaters." Saying that there "can be no faith without works," Valenti told how an alliance of veterans, civil rights leaders, farm activists, and neighbors demonstrated on behalf of western Pennsylvania farmer Bernard Tobin, whose rights to retain his farm and produce food were being jeopardized by the federal lending agency, the Farmers Home Administration. So far, the FmHA has had to back down twice.

Exchange visits to farms, churches, and communities have been undertaken through Food for Peace, between white rural farm families and black inner-city families. This fighting alliance has taken on the issue of giving the dairy farmers in the state—one of the nation's top five milk producers—parity (fair) prices, and exposing the price gouging by such monopolists as the Bronfman family, which owns many dairies through its Labatt's beer and Seagrams whisky companies.

Valenti introduced to the audience O.G. Christian, a Philadelphia Food for Peace activist who was a leader in his carpenters union, and for 12 years headed the West Philadelphia NAACP. Christian sponsored a resolution on behalf of the family farm, which passed the Pennsylvania state NAACP just days before the Chicago meeting.

## Demand justice for all

Virginia farm leader **Jack Hall** decried the police-state measures now in effect in his state and elsewhere. Earlier this year, Hall joined O.G. Christian in a series of Capitol Hill meetings to pressure Congress for emergency action on food and farm policy, and to end police-state tactics against farm activists. All the farm speakers denounced the jailing of Lyndon LaRouche and associates, and the harassment of others.

A statement was released sent by Lindsey Williams and Australian farm leader Ian Murphy to President Bush. It read:

"The jailing of Lyndon LaRouche has sent shock waves round the world and through all patriots, nationalist politicians, and freedom-loving citizens.

"We are shocked and amazed by the subversion of natural justice in the U.S. A.

"The question we must ask is, 'What are the real forces now persecuting Lyndon LaRouche in the home of the brave and the land of the free?'"

"Lyndon LaRouche is not in jail for what he has done but simply because he is a brave and patriotic American standing up for American tradition and truth.

"When President Bush releases Lyndon LaRouche, he will have proved he stands for the great American traditions of truth, justice, and freedom for all under God's laws."



## Save the family farmer!

*This resolution was passed by the Pennsylvania affiliate of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) at the end of October.*

WHEREAS independent family farmers have been the backbone of food production in America; and

WHEREAS tens of thousands of independent family farmers are being forced out of business every year, while hunger and starvation increase at home and abroad;

WHEREAS the main reason for the problem is the unfavorable financial policies used by the power structure against the family farmer; and

WHEREAS everybody's freedom is threatened if big corporations take over total control of food; and

WHEREAS the food crisis is made worse by the set-aside policy, where farmers are made to keep good land out of production; and

WHEREAS, as the shortage of food strikes this nation, it will impact hardest on black people and other minority populations of the big cities;

THEREFORE we in the NAACP resolve that every effort be made to get the government to take concrete steps to save the independent family farmer.