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Participants in the Panel 2 Discussion, from left to right. Top row: Robert Baker, Mike Callicrate, James Benham. Middle row: Kyle Kehrli, Ken Kehrli, Wilbur Kehrli. Bottom row: Frank Endres, James Moore, Jon Baker.

U.S. Food Producers' Roundtable

Science and Culture To End Famine— Principles of Agriculture Productivity

This is the edited transcript of a roundtable presentation of eight U.S. food producers to Panel 2, “Runaway Inflation or Glass-Steagall?” of the Schiller Institute’s June 18–19 Conference, “There Can Be No Peace Without the Bankruptcy Reorganization of the Dying Trans-Atlantic Financial System.” Introducing these food producers is Robert Baker (Virginia), Agriculture Liaison of the Schiller Institute. They are Mike Callicrate (Colorado/Kansas), Owner/Operator of Ranch Foods Direct; Jon Baker (Iowa), cattleman and rural community banker; Wilbur, Ken and Kyle Kehrli (Iowa), livestock and crop producers; Frank Endres (California), wheat grower and cattle rancher; James Moore

(Alaska), salmon troller leader; James Benham (Indiana), President of the Indiana Farmers Union and Board Member of the National Farmers’ Union.

Robert Baker: Hello! I’m Bob Baker with the Schiller Institute. You are now going to hear from eight American farm leaders and a fishery leader about the terrible conditions food producers face. They speak here for the purpose of identifying the principles of production we must have for a new system; one that will guarantee food and a future for everyone in the world. We have a world food emergency. The millions of people now suffering extreme hunger will turn into 1–2

billion at the starvation point. World grain stocks and output are going down. This must stop!

It's a question of culture, of science, and of statecraft. We're all in this. The Schiller Institute started a Food for Peace initiative in 1988 in Chicago to prevent what we now see unfolding. Today, let us all join together and renew what it takes for Food for Peace.

The farm leaders you are going to hear are from the Midwest, California, and Alaska. We will begin with Colorado and Kansas. Thank you.

Mike Callierate: This is Mike Callierate. I'm in Colorado Springs, Colorado. I have a food company here, and also a livestock producing operation in St. Francis, Kansas, which is right on the border [of Colorado]. So, basically, we've built a model of the food system that I think works, going forward.

I want to thank Helga LaRouche and the Schiller Institute for the opportunity to present today on this issue of this global monopoly financialization of everything—especially including the financialization of our food system. I agree that there can be no peace unless we can get justice. There can also be no peace unless we can get adequate food to the world's hungry people.

I see the financialization and I see the global financial monopolies just totally destroying any hope of getting the job done of actually feeding the world's hungry. It reminds me a little bit of how I learned how important food is, and how important the wealth that's created from the production of food is to our global economy. I was at my 10th year class reunion in Evergreen, Colorado, and Tina Owens' mother said, "Mike, what do you do?" And I said, "Well, I farm and ranch." She said, "Oh, wow! You're a wealth creator." I had never really thought about it that way. She said, "Yeah, when I was a young girl, my grandfather explained how farmers and ranchers create wealth. He also said that the problem is that everyone else does the laundry, and they're making more than they should."

When you see so much power in the financial sector,



Courtesy of Mike Callierate

A Callierate truck delivers meat, eggs, and other products to the Colorado Springs Food Hub, which is also the home of Ranch Foods Direct.

I basically compare it to a tape worm. They drain the wealth that's created from the land and from the people who do the work, and they put it in their own pockets, and concentrate that wealth into the hands of fewer and fewer people.

As we know, throughout history, the greatest threat to any free society is the concentration of power and wealth. So, I would love to see the global financial system that is extracting wealth from all wealth creators, whether they're in agriculture, mining of resources, or whatever, simply stop. We've got to get them back to doing some real work again. We've got to prioritize the interests of those wealth creators, whether they're the people who grow our food, or the people who make other things, or the workers within the system that adds the value to put food on our plates. We've got to start to prioritize them again in building a new food system.

The new food system should be based upon family farmers and ranchers providing good stewardship, providing good husbandry to livestock, addressing climate issues through better forms of production agriculture. I want to be able to see the governments of the world support these kinds of food systems that once again will create wealth and will provide good food security in all parts of the world. The world should feed itself. In the

United States, the biggest lie ever was that we were going to feed the world. We can't even feed ourselves today with the control of the Brazilians over our meat industry, the Chinese over our pork industry. We are in horrible shape; we cannot feed ourselves, and we are vulnerable to the meltdown of the global financial system.

So, I would like to see the financial system go away, not just declare bankruptcy, but just go away, and localize financial systems so they serve the people instead of corporations around the world. I would like to see, going forward, no conglomerate being allowed any ownership of any essential or critical industry.

A good example currently is baby formula. Abbott is part of a government-sponsored monopoly for producing baby formula, but their baby formula business is only 5% of their business. They really don't care about it that much; the CEO probably doesn't even look at it. But look at how it has impacted; this conglomerate control of food, of a critical food ingredient, how it has impacted America. That has got to stop.

And it's going, of course, to take a willing Congress to start enforcing some anti-trust laws, we're going to have to break up the concentrated power and wealth. In order to do that, it's going to take a new court system with judges that favor anti-trust law enforcement rather than the Reagan appointees who believe government was the problem, and that corporations don't need regulations.

Trade should not be between Cargill and us, it should be between people who produce the food and people who eat the food. This is the food system we are building here in Colorado Springs.

Another recent example is Cargill in Ukraine. Cargill is one of the biggest global predators on the planet. Cargill should not be allowed to be even involved in any of these critical industries. We simply need to break up this corporate power around the world. These are the real captains of industry; these are the real controllers of our food supply. These are like strip miners; they take it all. They take the entire resource until it's gone, and then they go somewhere else and do business. They search the world for the hungriest people who will work the cheapest, to sell that production into the highest consuming markets, which have been in the United States.

But if you really look at our financials, we're broke, and we need to favor more wealth creation in our country. We need to support those who actually produce the



CC/Fortunate4now

Cargill, one of the world's largest predators, "should not be allowed to be involved in producing, processing, or distributing food." Shown, the Cargill Superior Elevator S, an abandoned grain elevator along the Buffalo River in Buffalo, New York.

wealth that we need to survive, particularly in the way of food.

Jon Baker: Hello! I am Jon Baker from rural Iowa. I am a fourth-generation cattle producer, and a community banker. I would like to thank Helga LaRouche and the Schiller Institute for the opportunity to talk with you guys today. I am going to go through a couple of points here on the conditions of agriculture, and the conditions of rural America.

We are at a breaking point here in rural America. Our family farmers are to the point where they are either retiring or forced to grow to a size that extends a comfortable financial situation. The diversity that the family farm had at one point, and offered as a safety net, does not exist anymore. A lot of young producers are entering into custom growing contracts with large vertical integrators for livestock—mainly pork and poultry—as their source of diversification.

I believe we got to this point in the last 30–40 years with the basis of cheap food. The farm programs were designed for cheap food, and they favored large corporate processors, and a subsidy program for the producers' loss instead of a parity price program to keep the producer above the cost of production. This allowed



USDA

A family farm in northwest Iowa, showing alternating strips of alfalfa with corn on the contour to protect against soil erosion.

large, multi-national processors to buy products—mainly grain—at or below the cost of production. That has driven a large majority of the family farmers off the land or out of production.

I believe the best way that we can counteract the last 30–40 years of that policy is to go back to the economic policies that our country was based on and founded on, using LaRouche’s Four Laws as the main driver. Physical production and infrastructure are the keys.

Wilbur Kehrli: I’m Wilbur Kehrli here with my son Ken and grandson Kyle. My grandparents and my parents went through the Great Depression back in the 1920s and ’30s. I’ve been in agriculture my whole life of about 84 years. I’ve seen a lot of things come and go. The sad part of it, I’ve seen the downfall of the independent producer. Wall Street and mega systems are kind of controlling our production, and they are not more efficient. They just control the value of the products, and that is leading to the demise of the independent producers.

Back in the 1920s, there was an act—the Packers and Stockyards Act—that was put into law, and it was used and broke up the railroads and the packers’ domination in our system. That Act is still there; we do not

have politicians with enough intestinal fortitude to enforce it, so the independent producers and the consumers both are really being taken advantage of at this point in our production system. There is light at the end of the tunnel: We’ve got to overhaul the banking system, put back in the Glass-Steagall Act, return fair market value for agricultural products, put culture back into agriculture—it’s more than just agribusiness.

Ken Kehrli: Hi, my name is Ken Kehrli. I am an independent pork producer from northeast Iowa. I’ve been a full-time pork producer since 1985. I’ve watched our industry consolidate from what was an independent, smaller farm model to much larger numbers now. It’s a very efficient system in volume when everything works.

With the past problems, packing house employee positivity rates for COVID, plant shutdowns, these kinds of things, it disrupted our industry greatly. We’re now looking at the threat of foreign animal disease and those shutdowns, and basically that’s terrible for the people who care for the animals, and for the animals. Again, a very efficient system; we can produce pork in the U.S. as cheaply and efficiently as anyone in the world, and it’s a great protein product. The problem is when the system is disrupted, the problems just multiply.

So, as we look at this, the only solution that I can come up with, particularly now with food security as such an issue worldwide, is local systems. That includes humane harvest, packaging, processing, cutting to local consumer specs, and that whole system being recreated that can serve individual families, restaurants, food service, groceries. We’ve actually got in some cases meat cases in Iowa that are short of meat products. Again, it looks to me like adding that component at least to our production system here would be a great benefit.

Currently in the U.S., one out of every five pigs needs to be exported. And when containers aren’t available, or there are geopolitical issues that shut down that flow of pigs, further consolidation in our industry occurs because it puts more independent producers out of business. Again, we’re in the middle of the bread basket of the United States in Iowa, and you’ve got the average consumer worried about food security. So, maybe local production, local systems are a positive, moving forward.

Kyle Kehrli: I’m Kyle Kehrli. I live here in north-

east Iowa with Wilbur and Ken. I'm the fifth generation of our family to farm here in the U.S. I've got two little girls—four and six—so, they'll be the sixth generation. I worked in town for seven years prior to coming home. I've been home farming full-time for four years now. When I graduated in 2005, farm ground was bringing about \$5,000 an acre. Today, in 2022, that number is about \$18,000–20,000.

So, we've seen some rapid inflation just over a short time period. It makes it very difficult for young producers to try to come back and start from scratch. You need this generational support in order to make a go in agriculture. We're seeing this lost generational knowledge as these younger guys are struggling to come back and try to get in the game.

Another issue that we have is when we try to go to the sale barn, or buying stations if we can find them, they've also gone by the wayside as these large corporations take over control of the supply of animals coming into the system. But as we try to go into those sale barns and buying stations, there are fewer and fewer buyers at those events. So, it's difficult to have a competitive price for your product, which in the case of a beef animal, you're looking at 16 months from birth to harvest. It represents a lot of time, effort, and money. That can all go by the wayside in 20 seconds in the sale ring. We don't have enough competition in there to get a fair price for the product that we're producing.

Wilbur Kehrl: We want to thank the LaRouche organization for the opportunity to participate. I think keeping the family in our structure today is critical. I think maybe we should be reminded of the David and Goliath story from the *Bible*. Picture yourself as David, and I think we need to picture our government and our corporations as Goliath. With that in mind, full speed ahead.

Frank Endres: My name is Frank Endres, and my sons and I are farming here in the Sacramento Valley of California. We are struggling to survive the worst

drought that we've had here in 127 years. So, that's what we're doing here. I could have mentioned also that many people are now re-looking at the NAWAPA project because of the drought in the whole western part of the United States. It's causing people now to look at another source of water, because our traditional sources here in California—the Shasta Lake Project and also the Colorado River Project—those reservoirs are in dangerously low positions right now. Some farmers, like in the Imperial Valley, are dependent solely on the Colorado River for irrigating their crops. There is a



Courtesy of James Moore

“Being a fisherman, you’re an optimist. If you’re not catching, it’s because you haven’t quite got it figured out yet.” —James Moore. Shown is Moore’s commercial salmon fishing troller, Aljac.

desert area; they are totally dependent on that water there to produce their crops.

I want to thank Helga LaRouche and also the Schiller Institute for making this available to be transcribed all over the world to other farm people and consumers as well. Because we are on the verge of food insecurity all over the world. Farmers have been producing food for less than 30% of parity. This has caused a real severe crisis in our food production and our food security now. So, we're glad to see, and I salute the farmers in other countries for the efforts that they're making over there, especially the farmers who just had some very good success in India by having some stability in their crop prices over there. So, I'm grateful for the opportunity that the Schiller Institute has provided, and I'd like to participate in the future as well.

James Moore: Hello! I'm Jim Moore. I'm a commercial fisherman in the state of Alaska. I've been fishing for about 53 years now, and I've seen a lot of changes in this industry. There are different kinds of commercial fisheries. My particular type is trolling, which is hook and line fishery, as opposed to trawling. It's sometimes confused with trawling, which is towing nets through the water. I'm past President of the Alaska Trollers Association.

I've been involved in fisheries politics for a decade or two or three. I have three children. My wife and I raised them on our boat, at least during the season. They did get to go to school and all that. I guess what I'm saying is that our particular type of fishing, this trolling, is like the fishing equivalent of the small family farm. They're mostly small family operations, and the families get the opportunity to work together. There's a lot of benefits in that. Nearly all of my nine grandchildren are Classical musicians, as well as my children, too.

But I'm really distressed at our world situation, and challenged by it, you might say, because being a fisherman, you're an optimist. If you're not catching, it's because you haven't quite got it figured out yet. There are fish out there somewhere. But looking at our world situation is very distressing. In fisheries' politics, I guess maybe I'll take it from this angle.

We're facing a lot of challenges. One of the greatest ones that I see is the politicization of science, and actually the breakdown of science. Science by a consensus. The lack of hope for a future based on this narrative that's been programmed into us for a couple of generations, that humanity is the cause of the Earth's collapse of the eco-systems and all of this kind of stuff. It's basically just junk science.

I've been distressed by that because most people engaged in our industry, as in other productive industries, find it's really difficult to be able to hire young people who are good workers. A lot of it is because they have no hope; no hope for a beautiful future; which I believe we can create. A lot of it has instilled in them through these horrible narratives, like your very breath is destructive to the atmosphere of the Earth, and it's going to cause catastrophic climate change and all this kind of stuff.

I take a lot of young people out fishing, and I'm heartbroken at seeing the demoralization of an entire generation that's been fed these lines of hopelessness. I think it can be reversed, and I think the way has been

made very clear by the principles of economy that Lyndon LaRouche has laid out. I think it's referred to sometimes as the Four Laws. I wrote a letter to the President back in 2020; it was President Trump at that time. I think I'll just read some of what I wrote then.

It's absolutely essential that we invest in a great infrastructure upgrade. The actual physical economy rather than in another bail-out of the bankrupt international financial system, back-filling their gambling losses and enabling the continuance of the so-called "too big to fail" private banking cartels. We should have learned that by now. A casino economy based on speculation has replaced our former production-based economy since 1971 with the elimination of fixed exchange rates between nations, and especially since the repeal of Glass-Steagall in 1999. Huge amounts of capital have been diverted into short-term risky investments which promised rapid turnover and high rates of return: gambling, rather than placed into maintaining and upgrading infrastructure, including health care infrastructure. The time is now to address this properly.

I wrote that over two years ago, and it's kind of strange when you think that the leadership that we have seen in this nation, in Congress, has failed to grasp the import of this, and has failed to act. This was written to the President of the United States by a fisherman. What are they doing up on the Hill in Washington, D.C.? Surely, they must have seen this, it's really so evident, so clear. But I am not despairing because reality is about to strike. And reality has a way of correcting.

I'm so thankful for the influence on my life and my thinking of the Schiller Institute and the LaRouche movement. The ideas and the writings of Lyndon LaRouche, which I've followed off and on, and now mostly on, for the last 30 years. I am therefore hopeful that we can indeed have a beautiful future. But we have to act.

James Benham: I'd like to thank Helga LaRouche and the Schiller Institute for the opportunity to speak today. My name is James Benham. I'm currently a State President for the Indiana Farmers' Union, and am also on the National Board of the National Farmers' Union.

I'm going to talk a little bit today about Glass-Steagall. About nine years ago, in 2013, I wrote an article that preferred that. I'm going to read that again, because nothing has really changed in that.

I'm writing to urge you to act immediately to ensure that the 1933 Glass-Steagall Act is reinstated as the law of the land now.

The industry and agriculture of our nation are in ruins. The suffering of the elderly and the poor are intolerable. The suffering around the world has reached a famine stage in too many places. Let me speak about what I know: farming. As an active corn and soybean farmer, head of the Indiana Farmers Union and member of the National Farmers Union Board, I can tell you that the food supply of the world and this nation is in peril, because we have let speculators set farm policy, as well as banking policy. Speculators determine the price of commodities at the expense of both producers and consumers. Speculators are driving farmers out of farming, and without farmers, who is going to produce the food?

Pass Glass-Steagall and we can get in the business of rebuilding the nation. We'll be able to pass farm and food supply legislation based on the principles of parity pricing for farmers and food security for Americans, and domestic production and reserves. We can finance urgently needed water projects, such as the North American Water and Power Alliance—NAWAPA.

Let me recap on a couple of those things, because when we talked about Glass-Steagall back in 2013, there were a couple of bills in Congress trying to pass that. Today, things have gotten worse because there's no such bill in Congress. They have gotten way past that to where they are actually enslaved to the banking system and speculators we have in the world today. We have a lot of people in Congress who are basically captives of this industry. I used to talk about—still do, and have been admonished for saying this—but we have the best politicians money can buy. That's a fact. They just go in there, and too many special interest groups fund these guys and gals, and it comes to the point where they're not effective for the folks in the United States.

As far as parity, parity is something that we've talked about for a long time in agriculture. We felt like that would be a fair shake and a good return on the investment for people to continually be able to produce food. The problem with what we have today, and under our current system, and with the pandemic we've had and the shortage of supplies and the demand being as high as it is, commodity values are high.

Farmers are making more money today than they have ever, with the exception of one problem. The inputs that they've got have climbed that same ladder, and therefore they continually squeeze the value of the dollar the farmer is receiving because of the speculation and the ability to increase their prices. Farmers have to have some of these inputs to produce a crop. One of the big things that was talked about early on is that most of our potash comes from Russia. We've had a mine or two here in the United States, but they shut them down years ago. So, without that potash, there's a concern about the ability to raise crops. There are other alternatives, but none that people want to try to explore, because it's easy and what people have been accustomed to doing.

So, with that, I'd like to finish up with a couple of things. I am a Christian; I do feel like we are in the end times. And some of the things we're dealing with now are because of our turning away from God's creation and the Biblical means of doing things. I do want to make one statement today, and it's a little bit like what we had in Sunday school this morning. It was *James*, Chapter 1, verses 26–27:

Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues, deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

There's our challenge. How do we institute this? How do we get back in those kinds of reins, and the understanding that the people who are in charge of these things now that's causing us all these troubles, are not going to give it up easily. So, I'll end with this: What are we prepared to do? Simply, what are we prepared to do?

Thank you so much. You all have a great day, and I hope this has been a worthwhile message. Thank you.