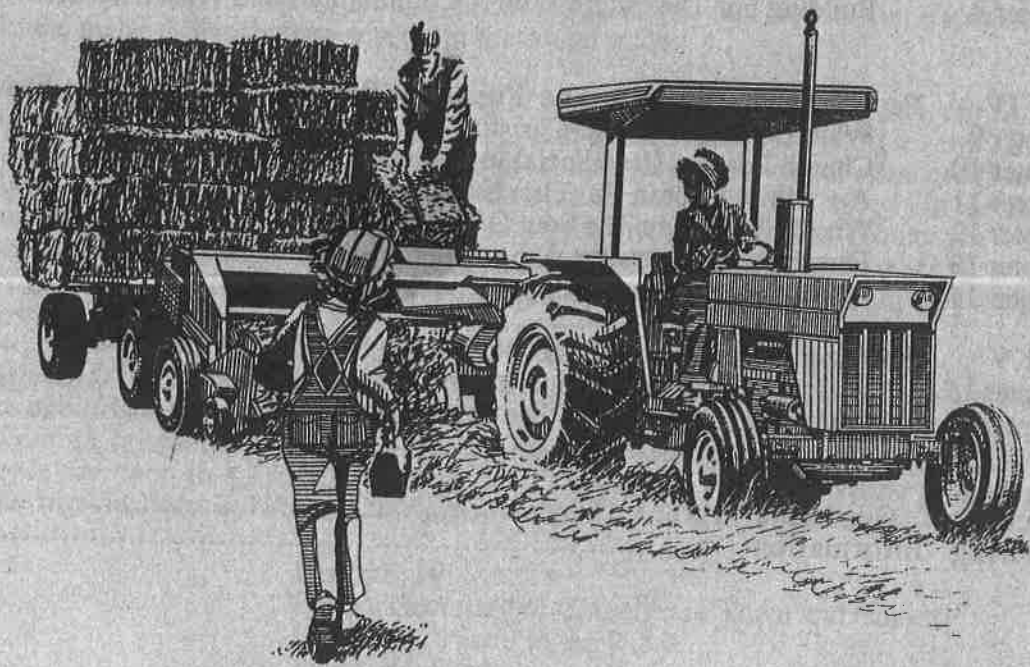


FAMILY FARM OR FACTORY FARM?

A TIME TO CHOOSE



Lowell Bolstad

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Foreward

In 1945 I began my task as Secretary of Churches in Town and Country. At first I tended to overstate the importance of the church's ministry to people living in rural areas. I referred to the rural ministry as the front line of the church's ministry. As I matured in my judgment, I no longer said the rural ministry is more important but *just* as important as the other ministries of the church. The church has many fronts. It needs to move ahead on all its fronts.

What makes a call to serve important is not geography, density of population, size of congregation, nor salary but the author of the call. A call from God to serve people is an important call no matter where it takes the recipient. Every call from God demands that the recipient treat it with respect and dignity. When accepted, it merits the full commitment of one's energy and talent. A call from God demands that the worker not be ashamed.

As I reflected on the things that Pastor Lowell Bolstad is doing in the Prairie Farm community, it is evident that the calls he received from God via his two congregations were treated with respect and dignity. In his booklet, **Family Farm Or Factory Farm? A Time To Choose**, he identifies and discusses current issues that rural people face. He is a student of his community and rural society in general. He has a micro as well as a macro view of the current rural situation. He challenges his people and his readers with a comprehensive view of mission. Issues are not discussed in depth, but the booklet exposes the reader to the many things that are stirring in the countryside.

Rural parishes everywhere, but particularly in the heartland of the nation, are facing difficult times. The spirit of lay people, pastors, and church leaders is being severely tried. They need the prayers and encouragement of the total church. The countryside needs innovative lay persons, creative pastors, and courageous church leaders. Their vision needs to focus on what can be. The author indicates the structures of our rural society are being questioned. New approaches to farming are being tried by innovative farmers. It is true these are difficult times for people in rural communities and rural parishes, but they are also exciting times.

It appears to me that people in rural America have a desire to be done with the conquest of nature and find ways to work with nature. This is a time when the church must equip the people with a Christian world view. There are many indications in Lowell Bolstad's story that people are open to a Christian world view. I hope many will take time to read and study the booklet **Family Farm Or Factory Farm? A Time To Choose**.

Pastor E. W. Mueller
Former Secretary of Churches in Town and Country
Lutheran Council in the U.S.A.
Plainfield, Iowa

Part I

Farming As A Matter Of Scale

“The identification of scale as a *problem* implies that things can be too big as well as too small, and I believe that this is so. Technology can grow to a size that is undemocratic and then inhuman. It can grow beyond the control of individual human beings — and so, perhaps, beyond the control of human institutions. How large can a machine be before it ceases to serve people and begins to subjugate them?

“The size of land holdings is likewise a political fact. In any given region there is a farm size that is democratic, and a farm size that is plutocratic or totalitarian. A great danger to democracy now in the United States is the steep decline in the number of people who own farmland — or landed property of any kind.

“Moreover, in any given region there is a limit beyond which a farm outgrows the attention, affection, and care of a single owner.”

The Gift of Good Land. By Wendell Berry. North Point Press. San Francisco. 1981. pages 121-122.

Family Farm Or Factory Farm?

In April of 1988, I was asked to give the invocation for the Future Farmers of America (FFA) banquet at the local high school in Prairie Farm, Wisconsin. Arnold Davis, the vocational agriculture teacher and FFA advisor, had requested that I come to the spring event. He was scheduled to speak on vocational agriculture and the activities of the FFA chapter as well as to give various awards to the members. Paul Oman, state FFA vice-president from Amery, Wisconsin, was to present the banquet speech on *The Changing Image Of Agriculture*. Leonard Splett, from the Barron County Soil Conservation Service, was to show slides of *Agriculture In China* based on a trip there.

To begin with, I thought I would simply be carrying out a function expected of many parish pastors. But, as I took part in the event and listened to the presentations, I became taken by how two different styles of farming were being represented. Together with this contrast, a view of agriculture as practiced in another country gave added perspective. As a church leader requested to give an invocation at the gathering, I asked myself, "In my life's work outside of that setting, upon which kind of agriculture would I choose to invoke a blessing?" This experience helped me to formulate the question — "Family farm or factory farm?"

Number Of Future Farmers In America Declines At Prairie Farm High School

Arnold Davis looked disheartened as he welcomed FFA members, parents, guests, and school officials to the banquet. "I don't know about you, but I didn't have a very good day today," Davis began. With a dry sense of humor, he told how he did not know until the last minute how many FFA members would attend the banquet. Students gave various excuses of why they could not come. "The high point in the day came when one young man told me that he had to pick rock, but he *would* come next year," Davis explained.

Prairie Farm chartered its FFA chapter in 1962 and celebrated the 25th anniversary in 1987. The 1987-88 membership totaled 47 students; since 1978, the number had varied up or down about 10 from that figure. According to Davis, who has been teaching at Prairie Farm High School for as long as the FFA chapter has been chartered, the membership in FFA and enrollment in vocational agriculture classes were considerably larger prior to 1978. Davis gave the following reasons for the drop in numbers:

- A reduced farm population in which farmers are becoming an endangered species.
- Many schools have experienced an overall reduction in high school numbers.
- The recessionary farm economy, which affects the attitudes of production farmers, administrative decisions, and, in some cases, vocational agriculture teachers.
- The Perkins Bill, in its Vocational Education Act, passed in 1984, drastically reduced funds for vocational agriculture.
- At this time, production agriculture has zero growth potential with most opportunities considered replacement in nature.

"I hope all of these statements do not sound too discouraging or negative. I have elaborated some reasons for the decline. However, this is an agricultural community that, I expect, will always remain primarily agricultural. Surveys of our graduates find that the number one career choice has been agriculture and production farming," Davis concluded.

The Industrialization Of Agriculture — Bane Or Blessing?

In his banquet speech, Paul Oman, state FFA vice-president, tried to minimize some of the problems in agriculture by contending, "We have to remember that there are more farmers who *are not* going bankrupt, than *are* going bankrupt." With the right attitude, problems can be made into challenges, Oman offered. He defined his *possibility thinking* by asserting, "Perception is reality. What you can perceive can be accomplished. By employing a positive attitude we can learn and grow and turn our problems into successes."

Oman acknowledged that the number of FFA members in Wisconsin has dropped from 27,000 in 1976 to 15,000 in 1988. Many schools are faced with the possibility of having their agricultural programs cut to half-time or altogether. In addition there are changes in the classroom. The emphasis always used to be on production agriculture, but by 1992, 32% of the agricultural jobs will be in merchandising and sales; 29% in science and engineering; 14% as managers and financial specialists; 11% as social service professionals; just 8% in production agriculture; and 6% as education and communication specialists.

Oman added that the United States Department of Agriculture is predicting a shortage of people trained in agriculture due to decreased enrollments of ag students in colleges and universities. Currently there are over 48,000 employment opportunities annually for agricultural graduates with only 44,000 graduates to fill these jobs. Oman concluded, "The opportunities are good, so parents, support your Voc-Ag/FFA programs and don't let them die in your school. Agriculture is our #1 industry, and we must keep that in perspective."

After the speech by Oman, Leonard Splett — in his talk on farming in China — told how a more labor intensive form of agriculture provides work for the masses of people. He asserted that, if Chinese farming were modernized along the lines of the Western model, it would pose massive problems in finding employment for all the displaced farmers. "Industrialization of agriculture would be the ruination of that country," he contended.

"The industrialization of agriculture — bane or blessing?" The juxtaposition of agriculture in China by Leonard Splett and farming in the United States by Paul Oman poses a provocative question. While the direct transference of the situation in China to this country cannot easily be made, Splett's sober analysis provides a marked caution to Oman's optimistic appraisal. Chinese agriculture produces nine times as many calories per acre because of the use of intercropping and close rotations on small plots with hand labor. Fields in China have maintained a high level of productivity for thousands of years due to the fact that each acre is intensively cared for and used.

Is There A Future For Family Farming In America?

On the surface, talk of family farming seems tired and worn-out. Like Arnold Davis, many — who believe the family farm is the best hope for America — are disconsolate. And for good reason. In late 1988, the national Future Farmers of America decided to take *farmers* out of its name because the word was hurting recruiting. In addition, they decided to strip the words *vocational agriculture* from the FFA symbol, constitution, and bylaws and replace them with the words *agriculture education*. Is there a future for family farming?

The enthusiasm of one of the best and brightest like Paul Oman may seem refreshing, but his urging to adopt a positive attitude does not stand the test of reality. Such blissful confidence fails to take seriously the problems of farming today. Oman's *possibility thinking* is *happy talk* in which he espouses the importance of the family farm but emulates the values of the factory farm. Do we really want an industrial agriculture for our future?

Rural America Is Becoming Like A Third World Country

During the 1980s we have witnessed dramatic changes in rural America. More farm people have slipped below the poverty line. Farm size has increased, while farm numbers have decreased. The land has suffered from a degradation of soil and water. Government policy has hastened the demise of family farms. I contend that these conditions mirror certain trends in third world countries. This chapter seeks to make that connection.

As a way of addressing *Americans Suffer From Industrialization Of Agriculture*, I will draw upon the findings of various groups and individuals. Prairiefire Rural Action of Des Moines, Iowa has done a study on the growing poverty in rural America, while the Land Stewardship Project of Marine on the St. Croix, Minnesota has exposed the concentration of land ownership in the hands of major insurance companies. Marty Strange, of the Center for Rural Affairs in Walthill, Nebraska, has shown how industrial farming damages the environment, while Wendell Berry — philosopher, poet, writer, and farmer from Port Royal, Kentucky — has critiqued a social policy in favor of large farms.

Together with this I will be sharing personal learning experiences in *People Of The Philippines Live With Poverty And Hunger*. My understanding of this third world country comes from a travel seminar there in November of 1988. The trip was sponsored by the Center for Global Education of Augsburg College in Minneapolis, Minnesota. On the basis of these studies, I will compare rural America and the Philippines, show the global connection, and suggest an example for the possibility of change.

Americans Suffer From Industrialization Of Agriculture

Farm People Are Becoming The New Poor

In the Introduction of *No Place to Be: Farm and Rural Poverty in America*, Pastor David Ostendorf of Prairiefire Rural Action shows how an entire class of the *new poor* has been created in rural America.

Throughout the twentieth century, the backroads of rural America have been strewn with the victims of economic and social policies that have made rural people second-class citizens in a *first world* nation. The transition from an agrarian to an industrialized society was driven by an expansionist economy that simultaneously drew and displaced people from the land.

This transition was rooted in a market ideology that put economic *progress* before people. It produced conditions of chronic poverty and economic instability that the Congress and administrations of both parties refused to confront.

The assault of the Reagan-era on both the farm economy and social programs further devastated the rural poor and created an entire class of *new poor*. This process has been devastating to much of rural America, and especially to racial and ethnic minorities. Moreover, the way has been paved for even greater stratification through an emerging two-tier structure of agriculture and land control in which fewer control more and more control less, mirroring this same trend in American society.

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The farm crisis has been among the most well-documented domestic issues in this decade. Low commodity prices, high interest rates, and drastic declines in land values have all taken a deadly toll. Thousands of rural families, workers in agriculture-related manufacturing, and small town businesses have been adversely affected. This crisis combined with the entrenched, structural conditions of rural poverty, is moving countless rural people and communities to society's margins. As political power has concentrated in metropolitan areas and as a bi-coastal economy has emerged, it has become increasingly difficult for rural people to determine their own future. (page 6)

Ostendorf writes that during the remainder of the century those one-quarter of Americans living in the countryside will need to understand the forces exerting a control on their lives and to search for new strategies and tactics in response to this rural crisis.

The 36 page report documents how an entire class of new poor — once modestly prosperous and exceptionally productive rural residents — are finding themselves without food, without work, and without homes, and with less faith in the value of continued participation in the mechanisms of democracy. Farm families have been especially hard-hit:

- According to a United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service data, almost one-third of all farm households fell below the poverty level in 1986.
- An estimated 26,000 Iowa farms have gone out of business from 1981 through 1987. Nationally the figure is approximately 594,000.
- The farm population in the United States declined by approximately 1.1 million — or 18% — from 1980 to 1987. (page 2)

The authors of **No Place to Be** made a number of conclusions. They include the following:

- The industrialization of agriculture since World War II accelerated the displacement of farm and rural residents and led to gross economic disparities among the people left behind, the apt title of the Johnson Administration's 1967 report on rural poverty.
- Agricultural production is rapidly becoming severely stratified. While the number of large, industrialized farm operations is steadily increasing, the number of medium-sized family farms is declining rapidly. Although the number of smaller farms is also increasing, few if any of these operations could survive without off-farm income.
- And, while they are certainly not the first rural Americans to enter the ranks of the dispossessed, their presence is compelling evidence of the severity of the recent farm crisis. They are living proof of how the acute financial distress that characterized this recent period has now given way to broader structural dislocation and despair. (page 25)

No Place to Be outlines a number of specific public policy recommendations in several different areas. Among their recommendations are the following:

- The establishment of a new Homestead Act to resettle farm families, provide new opportunities for minority farmers, reform the policies of both the Farm Credit System and the Farmers Home Administration, conduct a comprehensive study of farmland ownership and patterns of land tenure, and revitalize rural communities.
- Comprehensive policy reform to provide higher prices for farmers in the marketplace through higher support loan rates, establish effective supply management for major farm commodities, and enhance the conservation of our precious soil and water resources.
- Establish international trade agreements among major exporting nations and insure stable reserves of farm commodities in order to protect consumers. (page 29)

More Of Those Who Own The Land Do Not Farm The Land

Major insurance companies now hold 5.2 millions acres of U.S. farmland according to a report by the nonprofit Land Stewardship Project (LSP) of Marine on the St. Croix, Minnesota and the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) at the University of Minnesota. "This research underscores the disturbing trend of rising corporate and absentee investor control of farmland and raises important questions about who will own the land and how it will be cared for in years to come," stated LSP executive director Ron Kroese.

The report entitled *Life Insurance Company Ownership Of United States Agricultural Land In 1987* updates the previous year's initial study and reveals a 27% increase in farmland acreage owned by insurance companies above the year-end 1986 figure of 4.1 million acres. The top five companies — Travelers, Hancock, Prudential, Metropolitan, and Aetna — own 4,121,000 acres, comprising 79% of the industry's holdings, the study reveals. Travelers Insurance of Hartford, Connecticut leads the industry in farmland owned with 1,013,000 acres.

Several Midwestern states saw significant increases in insurance company farmland ownership. In Iowa, the value of insurance company farmland grew from \$111 million at the end of 1986 to \$155 million at the end of 1987. South Dakota rose 56%, from \$20.5 million to \$32 million. Minnesota's figure increased 44% to \$92 million, while acreage jumped 55%, to more than 137,000 acres. The researchers gathered the data from the 1987 annual reports of the major insurance companies.

Researcher David Senf of CURA estimates that insurance companies currently own about \$2.5 billion in farmland nationally. From the early 1980s through 1987, major insurance companies acquired much of this land through foreclosure, Senf found. Farm acreage foreclosed by insurance companies in 1987 was surpassed only by 1986 volume, the research showed. LSP's Farmland Investor Accountability Program director Mark Schultz is concerned over the environmental damage that can result from absentee farmland ownership. "When decisions about soil conservation, chemical use or lease agreements are made in Hartford, Connecticut or Newark, New Jersey, we run the great risk of despoiling the gift of the land," Schultz said.

Dale Snesrud, a farmer near Webster, Minnesota, noted that large-scale absentee ownership makes farmers into tenants and hired hands. "What that means," Snesrud said, "is their purchasing power is less, so main street suffers. And their stake in the community is less, so you see less participation in the churches, schools, and civic organizations. To a great extent, absentee ownership degrades community life."

Snesrud is a member of the Family Farmland Stewardship Committee, which was formed in Minnesota earlier in the year with support from the Archdiocese of St. Paul/Minneapolis to address insurance companies with the concerns of rural community members. Rebecca Carson, another member of the committee, is concerned about far-reaching shifts in demographic and land tenure patters that may be brought about through corporate ownership of farmland. "Unless insurance companies change their current practice of selling land only to cash ready buyers, we are missing a tremendous opportunity to get young beginning farmers back on the land," Carson explained.

Added Robert Duban, the chair of the five-county committee, "We want the insurance companies to take proper care of the land while they own it by getting adequate conservation plans implemented. We want them to market and sell their land locally to small- and moderate-scale farmers who will keep land ownership in the local community. And we want the companies to help finance those acquisitions at reasonable terms."

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Industrial Farming Creates Environmental Degradation

In his book, *Family Farming: A New Economic Vision*, Marty Strange contrasts the characteristics of family farming and industrial agribusiness. He offers this portrayal, not as a means to categorize individual farms, but as a way to describe two different systems of agriculture. (pages 32-39)

Family Farming

Owner operated
Entrepreneurial
Dispersed
Diversified
At equal advantage in open markets
Family centered
Technologically progressive
Production process in harmony with nature
Resource conserving
Farming as a way of life

Industrial Agribusiness

Industrially organized
Financed for growth
Large scale, concentrated
Specialized
At an advantage in controlled markets
Management centered
Capital intensive
Standardized in their production process
Resource consumptive
Farming as a business

According to Strange, many — who believe they are engaged in family farming — hold to a view of the future that is characterized as industrial agribusiness. This dual focus represents a crisis of hearts and minds for American farmers, Strange believes.

The change from the social and cultural expectations of family farming to the attitudes and actions of industrial agribusiness has made changes in the land, too, Strange explains.

Once pristine regions of the country now experience environmental threats to safety and health from agriculture that are as serious as those urban areas suffer from heavy industry. Much of the damage is to the water that absorbs the chemicals used on farmland. According to the Nebraska Department of Health, eighty-one municipal wells in Nebraska — about one in five — are near or above tolerable levels of contamination from nitrate-nitrogen. The principle sources of nitrate pollution in groundwater in that state are agricultural chemicals and livestock wastes (Stansberry 1986).

In Iowa, environmental officials reckon that up to half of that state's municipal water supplies are contaminated with pesticides or other synthetic organic chemicals (Bullard 1986). Perhaps most alarming, the heavy increase in the use of fertilizer and pesticides in the past thirty-five years has also been epidemiologically implicated in the high rate of certain cancers among farmers (Blair 1982). It should not come as a surprise that the trend toward industrial agribusiness is accompanied by degradation of land and water resources. It is, after all, the stewardship of those natural resources that has made agriculture different from industrial businesses, and it is that difference that is eroding. If agriculture is to be made over in the image of industry, the way land and water are used will be changed. (page 42)

Marty Strange concluded that the changes in the relationship between the people and the land lies at the heart of the industrializing of agriculture.

Strange went on to assert that farmers must accept more responsibility for how they farm, while the public at large reinforces those moral commitments with policies, which foster cooperation and stewardship. Strange then suggested five policy changes.

1.) The array of subsidies to capital investment in agriculture that encourage expansion and depreciate natural resources should be ended.

- 2.) Farm production should be managed more sensibly with stewardship and deep concern for distribution of farm income driving policy.
- 3.) Americans should develop a national land policy to prevent concentration in farmland ownership and make land more available to those willing to farm it well.
- 4.) Agribusiness firms that sell to and buy from farmers should be subject to greater federal regulation to prevent unfair trade practices that reduce competition and discriminate against small farmers.
- 5.) Agricultural research and development of new technologies should be guided by a greater concern for social and environmental effects. (pages 254-290)

Adoption Of Industrial Values Causing Failure Of The Family Farm

In a 1986 speech at Hamline University in St. Paul, Minnesota entitled *A Defense Of The Family Farm, (Is There A Moral Obligation To Save The Family Farm?* Chapter 27. Edited by Gary Comstock.), Wendell Berry analyzed that the system of family farming is failing, because an order of values and a way of life to which family farming belongs is failing. The industrial values, which have been adopted by the people and leaders alike, are based on three assumptions:

- 1.) That value equals price — that the value of a farm, for example, is whatever it would bring on sale, because both a place and its price are *assets*. There is no essential difference between farming and selling a farm.
- 2.) That all relations are mechanical — that a farm, for example, can be used like a factory because there is no essential difference between a farm and a factory.
- 3.) That the sufficient and definitive human motive is competitiveness — that a community, for example, can be treated like a resource or a market, because there is no difference between a community and a resource or a market. (pages 351-52)

Connections between people and land are allowed no place in an industrial economy divorced from all ideals and standards outside itself, Berry stated. He added that this industrialization has brought about a general depreciation for physical work.

Berry stated, "As a nation, then, we are not very religious and not very democratic, and that is why we have been destroying the family farm for the last forty years — along with other small local economic enterprises of all kinds. We have been willing for millions of people to be condemned to failure and dispossession by the workings of an economy utterly indifferent to any claims they may have had either as children of God or as citizens of a democracy." (page 353) Berry singled out the land-grant system, which he contended has acted in concert with the values, ambitions, and aims of agribusiness corporations. Those who hand out the advice seldom place themselves in a position to act upon their own advice and to depend upon their livelihood from the practice of farming. (pages 354-56)

Farmers are not immune from criticism. According to Berry, "It could be argued that the great breakthrough of industrial agriculture occurred when most farmers became convinced that it would be better to own a neighbor's farm than to have a neighbor, and when they became willing, necessarily at the same time, to borrow extravagant amounts of money. They thus violated the two fundamental laws of domestic or community economics: you must be thrifty and you must be generous; or to put it a more practical way: you must be (within reason) independent, and you must be neighborly. With that violation, farmers became vulnerable to everything that intended their ruin." (page 356)

Following his description of the problem, Berry argued that this country must see to it that the price of farm products as they leave the farm should be on a par with the products that farmers buy and that supply must be adjusted to demand. Both functions can only be

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done by the federal government. In addition new policies regarding taxation and credit are needed. At the same time, he acknowledged that family farmers lack the political power to be optimistic about government help. "And so it seems to me that we must concentrate on those things that farmers and farming communities can do for themselves — striving in the meantime for policies that would be desirable," Berry stated. (pages 357-58)

Berry went on to say, "Marty Strange has written also of his belief 'that commercial agriculture can survive within pluralistic American society, as we know it — *if* [my emphasis] the farm is rebuilt on some of the values with which it is popularly associated: conservation, independence, self-reliance, family, and community. To sustain itself, commercial agriculture will have to reorganize its social and economic structure as well as its technological base and production methods in a way that reinforces these values.' I agree. Those are the values that offer us survival not just as farmers but as human beings.

"And I would point out that the transformation that Marty is proposing cannot be accomplished by the governments or the corporations or the universities. If it is to be done, the farmers themselves, their families, and their neighbors will have to do it. What I am proposing, in short, is that farmers find their way out of the gyp-joint known as the industrial fantasy." (page 358) Berry listed a number of agenda items to make this happen.

1.) The first item on the agenda, I suggest, is re-making of the rural neighborhoods and communities. The decay or loss of these has demonstrated their value. We find, as we try to get along without them, that they are worth something to us — spiritually, socially, and economically. They need to love each other, trust each other, and help each other.

2.) Second, farmers must look to their farms and consider the losses, human and economic, that may be implicit in the way those farms are structured and used. If they do that, many of them will understand how they have been cheated by industrial orthodoxy of competition; how specialization has thrown them into competition with other farmer-specialists; how bigness of scale has thrown them into competition with neighbors and friends and family; how the consumer-economy has thrown them into competition with themselves.

3.) There is a correct ratio between dependence and independence. For a farm family, a certain degree of independence is possible and is desirable. But no farmer and no family can be entirely independent. A certain degree of dependence is inescapable. Whether or not the dependence is desirable is a question of who is helped by it. If a family removes its dependency from its neighbors — if, indeed, farmers remove their dependency from their families — and give it to the agribusiness corporations (and to money-lenders), the chances are that the farmers and their families will not be greatly helped. This suggests that dependence on family and neighbors may constitute a very desirable kind of independence.

4.) There is a ratio between consumption and production that is correct. A farm and its family cannot be *only* productive. There must be some degree of consumption. This also is inescapable; whether or not is desirable depends on the ratio. If the farm consumes too much in relation to what it produces, then the farm family is at the mercy of its suppliers, and is exposed to dangers that it need not be exposed to. When, for instance, farmers farm on so large a scale that they cannot sell their labor without enormous consumption of equipment and supplies, then they are vulnerable. ...there is a critical difference between buying and selling, and the name of this difference at year's end ought to be net gain.

5.) Similarly, when farmers let themselves be persuaded to buy their food instead of grow it, they became consumers instead of producers, and lost a considerable income from their farms. This is simply to say that there is a domestic economy proper to farming life, and it is different from the domestic economy of the industrial suburbs. (pages 358-359)

People Of The Philippines Live With Poverty And Hunger

Smokey Mountain is no ordinary hill. It is not made up of land mass. There is no grass or trees. Smokey Mountain is a huge garbage heap on the edge of Manila in the Philippines. The mound of refuse looms high in the air at the outskirts of the capital city. At times, methane gas rises from the top of the gigantic pile. Because of this fact, people have named the sprawling phenomenon Smokey Mountain. Living in the midst of this colossal dump is a large colony of squatters. These Filipinos have moved from the countryside in an effort to escape poverty and hunger.



Filipino children live with poverty and hunger in the midst of an urban squatters settlement.

Now they end up living in crude shacks constructed amid the stench and filth of waste, which grows larger with each truckload that has made its rounds through Manila. The people, including children, survive by scavenging through the garbage for anything they can find to use or sell. How can a person account for Smokey Mountain? What kind of conditions in the countryside would force people to migrate to the city only to end up with a fate as bad or worse? I asked myself these and other questions while visiting the Philippines.

Smokey Mountain was one of our first stops. From there we saw sugar plantations, peasant farms, fishing villages, other urban squatter settlements, churches, and factories as well as the U.S. Embassy and the U.S. Naval Base. We talked with sugar workers, fisher folk, peasant farmers, factory workers, church officials, and development workers, as well as prominent government officials — including Senator Agapito Aquino, brother-in-law to President Corazon Aquino. We also met with officials at the embassy and the naval base. Out of all this, I offer the following observations in an attempt to explain the poverty and hunger that characterize the lives of many in the Philippines.

Those Who Till The Soil Do Not Harvest Its Bounty

The life of a sugar worker in the Philippines is very difficult, as I discovered while visiting in the province of Negros. A population of 1.8 million in Negros is 90% dependent on the sugar industry. They produce 68% of the Philippine sugar crop. Such rich land has been turned into production for exports leaving the people without sufficient land to grow basic food crops. Many peasants go hungry and suffer from malnutrition.

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Planting, weeding, and harvesting the sugar cane is done by hand in hot and humid conditions. In watching the harvest, I saw how men would cut the tall cane with a large knife, wrap it into bundles, place a loaded stack on their shoulders, and walk up a narrow gang plank onto the bed of a truck to place the sugar cane.

According to one agricultural laborer, "Life under the landlord is terrible. Life is controlled by the landlord and his overseer. The landlord decides the wages. Much of the time we earn less than 20 pesos (\$1.00) a day. We can only eat tapioca and bananas. At times we will have a can of sardines." Another sugar worker explained, "The landlord lives in Manila. We deal with the overseer. Only the overseer can talk with the landlord. The landlord sets up a company store for the workers, which is administered by the overseer. Our people are in debt to the overseer."

Sugar workers can be hired and fired at the discretion of the overseer. Most of the work is seasonal, so that a sugar worker could expect to work a maximum of 180 days out of the year. Many are able to find paid work for only 120 days. This places a tremendous burden upon the families of the sugar workers who must borrow money to purchase provisions from the company store. The landlord may charge twice as much as what the same goods would cost at the marketplace. Such indebtedness makes for virtual slavery to the landlord.

The minimum wage has been established at 50 pesos (\$2.50) a day. One development worker spoke of this as the *killing wage*, because laborers cannot be expected to live on that. A majority of the owners do not pay the minimum wage; many do not pay the social security system tax and medicare benefits. The government has established that an average family of 6 needs 126 pesos (\$6.30) a day for food, clothes, and shelter. This does not include education. In fact, few workers can afford to pay the expenses of transportation and uniforms to send their children to school. The highest dropout rate occurs in the first grade, as children are needed to work in the fields.

The Few Own Much Land, While The Many Own Little Land

The importance of land and the access to land cannot be overemphasized. One prominent church leader explained, "Land speaks of life. That is why peasants want to make a claim to a piece of land. That is why the landowners want to hang onto the land."

How can one explain the paradox — that in a country, which is among the top 20 agricultural producers in the world, as many as 70% of the children suffer from malnutrition? According to a development worker, 3.2% of the population owns 43% of the land in the province of Negros. Out of a 1.3 million work force, 750,000 are unemployed. "The owners have the guns, the gold, and the goons to keep their land and control local politics," explained the development worker. Even a U.S. Embassy official acknowledged that in all the third world countries in which he had worked, including many in Africa, he had not seen such a great disparity between the rich and the poor as in the Philippines.

Landowners go to great lengths to protect their holdings. One prominent church leader recounted how, when Pope John Paul spoke to Filipinos in 1982, the pope told them that workers are entitled to fair wages and they have the right to organize. Afterwards, a landowner — who perceived that this church leader had been instrumental in the pope's visit — angrily called up and yelled over the phone, "If you want war, you will have war." Later, the church leader's house was bombed, and he received death threats.

After the U.S. took political control of the Philippines in 1900, an increasing amount of the sugar went to the U.S. By the 1930s, almost all sugar exports went to the U.S, and in 1934 a trade agreement tied the Philippines to a single market. In 1984, the sugar industry

collapsed. The international market in general and soft drink manufacturers in particular switched to a cheaper sweetener in the form of high fructose corn sugar — a sugar substitute made with the use of biotechnology, and the Philippines lost much of its market. As one peasant put it, "When the U.S. sneezes, the Philippines catches pneumonia."

Sugar workers were especially hard hit as they became unemployed with no land to grow basic food crops. The horrors of starvation and malnutrition became so extensive that some observers referred to Negros as Asia's *Ethiopia*. At the time I visited the province, the sugar industry had rebounded somewhat, due to an increased domestic market, but the long-range forecast does not demonstrate a strong demand for sugar.

An Environmental Nightmare

If the people cry out in the midst of the poverty and hunger, the earth groans under the degradation of the environment. To listen to the account of abuse is like experiencing a nightmare. This recounting becomes especially difficult in having seen the Philippines as a beautiful country with lush growth.

To start with, the land in Negros has become acidic through many years of continuous planting of sugar cane. Landowners, who used three bags (50 kilos each) of fertilizers for each hectare (2.5 acres) in 1970, must now use 25 bags of fertilizer. The pesticide malathion is used in the sugar fields and DDT in the rice fields.

An activist among landless peasants told of similar problems in the southern province of Mindanao where Dole has 60,000 acres planted in pineapples. Some of the soil has turned an ashen gray, and little else will grow there. Firestone and Goodrich plant rubber. Cargill from Minnesota and Massey Ferguson from Canada are increasing their land holdings in order to plant more yellow corn to be fed to poultry and livestock. Of great concern to this peasant activist was the increasing control of genetics in seeds and cattle by large corporations. "Before the Green Revolution, we had many varieties of rice from which to choose. With the Green Revolution funded by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, Rockefeller and Ford put up a big International Rice Institute, which cornered a collection of all the varieties and then introduced another rice.

"We are only planting three varieties of rice now. They are very closely related. If any serious disease should develop, it would wipe the varieties out and make for a terrible famine. At the present time, we are facing a virus disease by insects. No matter how many pesticides are used, the plants will sink," he asserted. He also told how multinationals control the yellow corn introduced by San Miquel and Cargill. Cargill controls the feed industry. In addition, companies are developing control of genetics in animals. "Technology is the next monopoly," he warned. Such hybrids in seeds and animals require the use of specific chemicals and make farmers dependent on inputs, he explained.

United States Exercises A Dominant Role In The Philippines

In a little-known chapter in American history, the U.S. invaded the Philippines in 1898 to 1900 and established a colonial rule. In one of the bloodiest wars of its period, approximately 10% of the Philippine population was killed. Illustrative of the cruelty in this war was a command from the American General Howlin' Jake Smith to his soldiers: "I want no prisoners. I wish you to kill everybody capable of bearing arms against the U.S. and that means any Samar boy over 10 years of age." Acquiring a strategic place for military bases in the Pacific acted as a consuming interest in this invasion.

As two American scholars studying in the Philippines — Robin Broad and John Cavanagh — explained it, gaining access to the production of sugar served as another

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motivating factor. The U.S. wanted Cuba at the time but could not get it, so settled on the Philippines. In a series of unequal treaties, the U.S. forced the Philippines into a dependency relationship. Philippine goods — such as sugar, tobacco, and hemp — could come into the U.S. without tariff. Industrial goods from the U.S. could enter the Philippines without tariff. The Philippines became an agricultural country producing export crops, much of which went to the U.S. Conversely, the dumping of industrial goods on the Philippines prevented them from developing their domestic industrial sector.

The presence of a naval base and an air base on Philippine soil has provided the chief means by which the U.S. has maintained its control over the political, social, and economic life of the country. As part of the bases agreement, the U.S. supplies and trains the Philippine military. For instance, in the early 1950s, CIA operative Edward Lansdale directed a counter-insurgency campaign — with the use of military advisors and covert operations — against a peasant uprising. Also, the declaration of martial law by Ferdinand Marcos would not have been possible without a military equipped and trained by the U.S.

At the present time, U.S. public opinion will not allow for American service personnel to fight and die in foreign countries. Therefore, the U.S. government is carrying out a strategic campaign through the Philippine military against the armed opposition. As one prominent church leader put it, "If the U.S. is serious about helping us, they should send us assistance for agriculture. You give us arms, and we kill each other. What help is that?"

One peasant organizer compared U.S. strategy to that used other places. "The CIA comes into this country, without going through customs, in order to advise the military. Philippine military employ the same tactics as used by the U.S. during the Vietnam War in zoning certain areas and moving out the civilians in order to flush out insurgents. The paramilitary behaves like the contras in Nicaragua in terrorizing peasants and like the death squads in El Salvador in killing the peasant leaders. The poor, in turn, are left on their own. Hungry people in the countryside come to the urban areas and end up on Smokey Mountain."

Farmers In Rural America And Peasants In The Philippines Share A Common Plight

The corn fields of rural America and the sugar cane fields in the Philippines are a half a world apart, but poverty is the common thread that ties farmers in rural America to peasants in the Philippines. Filipinos have experienced poverty from the time of the Spanish invasion in the 1600s. Kings and queens systematically took their land, lives, and wealth. At the present time multinational corporations rob the people of their rightful inheritance. For farmers in rural America, poverty comes as a new experience, and indications are that conditions may get worse before they get better. People in this country have a great deal to learn from those in a third world country who have endured so much for so long.

For the multinational corporations in the Philippines, the Green Revolution has been the tool used to gain control over the agricultural process. Peasants were convinced to use new seed varieties that required imported fertilizers. Prices were kept low the first few years, but raised later. Gradually the peasants became dependent upon the expensive imported supplies of high-yielding seed varieties, chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and machinery. Eventually the peasants became crushed by the debt load and enslaved to a life of poverty on the land. The resultant concentration of land ownership, damage to the environment, and loss of participatory democracy raise the kind of disturbing warning signals for people in this country that cannot be ignored.

Philippine People Demonstrate The Possibility Of Social Change

On the one hand, the poverty and hunger in the Philippines are crushing and dehumanizing. On the other hand, the buoyancy and spirit of the Filipinos are creative and liberating. The determination and perseverance to bring about social justice in the midst of such inequity stands out as nothing short of amazing. I was particularly impressed by the willingness of people to work together in organizations and coalitions. They demonstrated a unity in purpose in order to bring about social change.



Sugar workers march to make known their demands for fair wages and access to the land.

In addition I was struck by the collaborative relationship of bright, young, highly committed activists together with the peasants of the land, most of whom lacked any formal education. I commented on this to a development worker, whereupon he told me of a most interesting connection. In the late 1960s, many Filipino young people in the high schools and universities saw their U.S. counterparts protesting against the Vietnam War. As this development worker recounted that time period, many Filipinos came to see more clearly how the U.S. was intervening, not only in Vietnam, but also in their country.

They began protesting against U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia. In 1972, President Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law — in large measure to reassure foreign investors that the Philippines remained a safe place to do business. Because the conditions were not safe for students in the urban areas, many fled to the rural areas where they lived and worked with the peasants. By identifying with the poor, the young people working for progressive social change gradually won the trust and respect of the peasants.

How does this identification with the poor happen on an individual basis? I asked a young woman working with fisher folk. She told how she came from a middle class family and, while in college, attended some rallies at the urging of her friends. "Before I knew it, I was involved and so was my family," she explained. After graduating from college, she started working with a group committed to the cause of the fisher folk. This activist pointed out the importance of achieving close integration with the fisher folk by getting to know their problems. As an organizer, she helped them to know their legal rights. In addition her group sought to stop the exploitation of fisher folk by large commercial interests.

Part II

Farmers In The Third World Fight To Stay On The Land

The caraboa (water buffalo) is a large ponderous animal that plods unhurriedly through its chores of pulling wagons, plowing fields, or churning up the rice paddies. It provides the draft power for the Filipino farmer and serves as the farmer's best friend. The caraboa demonstrates great flexibility and resiliency in all kinds of conditions, but, if aroused or provoked, becomes tenacious and even dangerous. It is capable of fighting ferociously to the death.

The Philippine people are like the caraboa. In fact the caraboa has been transformed into a national symbol of the Philippine people. They show patience and kindness — almost to a fault. They have withstood tremendous suffering over an extended period of time, but now have become aroused and provoked. The Filipinos will fight long and hard in their struggle for justice.

—A metaphor often used to explain the character of the Philippine people

A Social Volcano Is Erupting In The Philippines

If Smokey Mountain portrays the poverty and hunger in the Philippines, then the image of the social volcano conveys the ferment and upheaval of the people. Filipinos have experienced political changes when Corazon Aquino was swept into power following the ouster of Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos, but social and economic conditions have not improved. Although Aquino is popular with the people, many of those we asked told us they regard her as a figurehead. The military wields considerable power in the new government. In fact, one development worker summed it up, "Conditions are actually worse under Aquino than they were under Marcos. At least under Marcos, we knew where we stood with martial law. Now the paramilitary vigilantes are killing so many peasant leaders. Even health and development workers are murdered. Nobody is safe."

The struggle for social and economic justice goes on. Even with elections, the Philippines is still a democracy of the elite. Those in power represent the small minority who are rich in land and wealth. The peasant masses do not have proportionate representation in the structured decision making process. Following are four areas in which many Philippine peasants are working for social change.

Sugar Workers Unite To Achieve Fair Wages And Gain Access To The Land

Making workers aware of their human dignity comprises the most basic work of a union of sugar workers. As one organizer stated, "Filipinos working on the haciendas have been so subservient that consciousness raising becomes the first order of business. Laborers must come to believe in their value as individuals. No longer can they think just of their personal survival. By joining together, we gain strength in numbers."

This union of sugar workers also seeks to make its members aware of their right to a minimum wage. Through negotiations with the plantation owners, wages for its members have gradually increased since 1980 and have consistently averaged more than nonunion workers. Workers place pressure on the owners to pay social security taxes and benefits. The union helps its workers to bring grievances to the owners. With a membership of 120,000, the union has gained power through the years.

After the collapse of the sugar industry, many of the owners face the prospect of having their lands foreclosed by the banks. The union of sugar workers is taking advantage of the situation to gain access to the land. A group of us visited a cooperative where 50 families had joined together to purchase 85 acres of land over a period of 15 years. They planned to use organic practices in diversifying their farm. They grew rice, vegetables, and fruit orchards for their own use as well as peanuts, cowpeas, and sugar cane for cash crops. In addition, they raised ducks, goats, chickens, and pigs for protein in their diet.

In reflecting on the state of the sugar industry, one union organizer stated, "The depression is a blessing in disguise. The best thing that could happen is for the sugar industry to completely collapse. Maybe the owners would abandon their lands, then, and the people could have access to the land in order to grow food crops."

Various Population Sectors Join To Press For Genuine Agrarian Reform

A prominent church leader is among those who is calling for genuine agrarian reform in the Philippines. "I would like to see the tillers of the soil be given land and provided with services from the government. Landowners should go into industry and leave the land to the tillers of the soil," the church leader stated.

A peasant connected with an organization of small farmers explained to me that he believed the back wages of agricultural workers should be counted towards the payment of the land. "We have experienced under Marcos that farmers could not pay the price of the land with money. Our forefathers have been paying for the land with their labor," this peasant asserted.

An activist in the women's movement stated that land ownership is one of the three main issues affecting the lives of women. Together with this analysis, her organization is working for genuine agrarian reform in which the land is freely distributed to the landless. When I asked her what she thought of President Corazon Aquino, she answered forcefully, "Aquino is oblivious to our demands. During the election she made lots of promises. Now she does not deliver. She is part of the elite landowners. We cannot expect her to want to change things. Life is even more harsh than under Marcos. When she declared her *total war policy* on the insurgents, it allowed the vigilantes free reign." When I followed up by asking if she, as a woman, felt betrayed by Cory, she immediately replied, "Yes!"

The Aquino government passed a land reform bill that was explained to us by Senator Heherson Alvarez of the Committee on Agrarian Reform. Alvarez, who was educated at Harvard University and self-exiled in the U.S. during part of the marital law period, defended the government's land reform program by saying that the government does not have the money to pay the landowners for the land. If the people would only be patient, he argued, the program could work for some of the landless and the insurgency would dissipate. Alvarez asserted that the government needed to pursue a free market system. As a part of this strategy, the Philippines could expand its light manufacturing to export more finished clothes and shoes to the U.S.

Florencio B. Abod, one of the few members of congress willing to work closely with the people's organizations, proposed the original agrarian reform bill. Later he withdrew his sponsorship when the legislation became so diluted that it bore little resemblance to what the coalition had called for. He pointed out several loopholes in the final bill that allowed large landowners to hang onto their holdings. One of these provisions permitted landowners to subdivide their holdings over time and so keep the wealth in the family.

Even though legislation has passed, the issue will not go away. Peasants, sugar workers, tenant farmers, fisher folk, church people, and many other groups are working for a national referendum on genuine agrarian reform.

Restoring The Balance To Nature

In the midst of an organic and diversified experimental farm stands a clinic. At this clinic, I observed a health practitioner make a diagnosis on a 21-year-old woman who complained of chest pains and numbness in her arm. When I asked how an otherwise healthy looking young woman should be having heart problems, he explained that she had come from an area in which the military had moved all the people out of the area in search

of insurgents. Because of constant turmoil, she had developed heart problems. When four trips to western-style hospitals had not helped her, she decided to come to the clinic.

The health practitioner stated that most people cannot afford hospitals, and so his clinic has to look for alternatives. He used acupuncture, prescribed exercise and relaxation techniques, as well as the use of herbal medicines. In stating his philosophy he told how all of life is filled with negative and positive. The secret is to restore the balance and live in harmony. In that moment, I saw clearly the sizeable challenge in restoring sanity to the human spirit and to the ecological habitat. The whole purpose of the experimental farm was to demonstrate how, in the midst of poverty and hunger, life for people and the environment could be made safe and secure.

Workers grew native varieties of rice that stood tall even in the midst of recent typhoons. Their yields were 50% of what they would have gotten with hybrid seeds and fertilizers, but the costs of production were 15% of high-input methods. A nursery started the seedlings to be planted in the vegetable and herbal gardens. No chemical fertilizers or pesticides were used. They made their own compost for fertilizer and employed natural pest controls — such as predatory insects as well as plants that detract harmful insects. Coconut and banana trees bore fruit along the edges of the fields. They raised goats, ducks, and pigs. Laborers did a variety of tasks. Development workers shared their findings through seminars and publications with other farmers.

Filipinos Seek National Sovereignty

Two key issues stand out as central in the debate as to how the Philippines can expect to attain national sovereignty. The first has to do with whether or not the agreement for the U.S. naval and air bases should be renewed in 1992. As one prominent church leader stated, "I believe the majority of the people do not want the bases and the nuclear warheads in our harbors." Many agree with this church leader that the presence of these weapons makes the Philippines vulnerable to an early attack in the event of a nuclear war.

Others argue that, as long as another country has its bases on their land, Filipinos will never be truly free to determine the course of their destiny. They point to the control the U.S. has over the government and military by virtue of its aid agreements. Still others believe the bases serve, above all, to protect substantial U.S. economic interests in the country. A spokesperson at the U.S. Embassy stated that the U.S. would like to negotiate a new agreement for the bases. If an agreement cannot be reached, though, the U.S. is prepared to leave and find new facilities in another country, he said.

In the second key issue, Filipinos must also decide what to do about a national debt that takes 43% of their national budget just to pay the interest without touching the principle. The current administration has chosen to pay the price, even though that course of action leaves little money for development. Senator Agapito Aquino told us, "As a businessman, I am never scared of debt. We need to borrow more money to pay our debts. A country must acknowledge its debts."

A coalition of people's organizations seeking to address the debt issue argued that this matter could reach crisis proportions soon. A spokesperson pointed out that the debt amounts to \$500 for each Filipino and requires 40% of their exports simply to service the debt. They are calling for a three-point program to drastically reduce the debt: 1.) Declare a bank holiday until the Philippines reaches a satisfactory agreement with its creditors; 2.) Place a cap on debt service of 20% of export earnings; 3.) Disengage from fraudulent loans.

Development Or Dependency In West Africa?

Who can forget the pictures and stories of the drought and famine in West Africa in 1984? People walked for days to reach food distribution centers. Their coming — dust-covered, haggard and with eyes sunk deep in their sockets — gave testimony to their hopelessness. Exhaustion and defeat showed on their faces. Hundreds of thousands of Africans suffered from malnutrition, starvation, and death itself. Because of hunger, farmers could only work three to four hours a day. For lack of strength, cattle were unable to pull plows. Seeds planted in hopes of a harvest failed to germinate.

Nothing is more basic to human life and social organizations than food. The ability to produce food becomes the most important part of a country's security; the inability to provide food for its people invites calamity. The drought and famine in West Africa revealed to the world an ongoing tragedy of vast proportions. In the broader perspective, the drought was more than a shortage of rainfall, and the famine more than a lack of food.

West Africa Suffers From Legacy Of Former Colonialists

In their book, *Seeds of Famine: Ecological Destruction And The Development Dilemma In The West African Sahel*, Richard W. Franke and Barbara H. Chasin tell how the French colonialists interrupted a mutually beneficial relationship between pastoralists and farmers in order to impose a mono-culture system of agriculture. Africans had developed the ability to herd their cattle and farm the land in such a way that recognized the limits of the soil. In contrast to this, the French levied taxes in order to coerce the Africans into growing peanuts for the European vegetable oil market. Because of the demand for this cash crop, the land was no longer allowed to lie fallow in order to recover its fertility; this course of action set in motion a wave of environmental degradation. The authors claim that, in the end, it was not so much the drought which destroyed the land, but the destroyed land which brought on the drought. (Chapter 3)

Africans were reduced to laboring on their own land for another's benefit. Social and family life patterns became disrupted when males were forced to seek work away from home. The livelihoods of artisans and traders were destroyed as the French flooded the African markets with cheap manufactured goods. Along with this, West Africa was prevented from developing its own industrial sector. Because more land was used for export crops, less land was available for domestic foods. With little food in storage, the people became more susceptible to hunger in times of natural or economic disaster. (Chapter 3)

United States Government Fosters Dependency In Name of Development

What can be done for the people of West Africa in order to achieve greater self-reliance in growing food for their own use? I asked this question when I visited Senegal, Mauritania, Niger, and Mali in January and February of 1988 as a part of a travel seminar, which was sponsored by Lutheran World Relief (LWR), an assistance and development arm of Lutheran church bodies. In the process, I discovered two different types of development being practiced. One was a governmental approach as exemplified by U. S. Agency for International Development (U.S.AID) and Diplomatic Corps; the other a nongovernmental approach as shown by private voluntary organizations, such as LWR.



These men had walked fifteen days to the capital city of Bamako, Mali in order to buy food and were making the return trip to their home near Timbuktu.

While the French continue to be major players in West Africa, the U.S. makes its presence known. I came to understand this when our group met with Landon Walker, the U.S. Ambassador to Senegal. He told how the U.S. uses the leverage of debt to impose economic reform. On the surface, the goal of helping Senegal to become food secure sounds laudable; on closer inspection, the development approach shows a dependency relationship.

Let me explain how this works. If you came to me and said, "Landon, my wife is ill, and I can't pay my bills. Please lend me some money." We then have to stabilize your finances and keep you afloat. If I came back to you and said, "I have thought about your problem, and clearly you are in trouble. I don't just like to give money for current expenses. So what I have decided to do for you is to make some major renovations of your house. Now if your wife is in the hospital and you can't pay your bills, you wouldn't say 'no.' This is true on an individual basis. This is true on a national basis.

What interest is the U.S. pursuing? According to Walker, "The U.S. seeks to gain a functioning trade partner, hopefully along our lines of development." As evidence of this, he joked, "After 2.5 years we stole the wheat market from the French, and they just about shot me." Loss of control follows for the Senegalese; they no longer have the right to plan for their own future. As a part of the austerity program, the U.S. tells the Senegalese which programs to cut and which people to fire. In the development effort, the U.S. instructs the West African government which steps to take and how to go about them.

As a result of talking with Sarah Littlefield, head of the U.S.AID in Senegal, and Art Bronstein, the Food for Peace officer, I detected specific ways in which the governmental approach fosters dependency. To begin with, their lack of respect for African peasants showed a condescending attitude in which the African farmer is seen as incompetent until suitably instructed in the western ways of doing things. For instance, U.S.AID brings in new hybrid seeds and provides a fertilizer subsidy. Usually, only the bigger farmers can afford these technological innovations. For the others, this kind of development imposes inputs on farmers who find themselves going even deeper into debt. In order to introduce this more technologically advanced agriculture, U.S.AID brings in contract teams from major U.S. universities. By doing so, they undermine self-reliance.

Intensive Gardening Offers A Chance For Self-Reliance

The approach of nongovernmental organizations demonstrates an alternative form of development. These groups implement projects that are largely operated and managed by local farmers and do not require highly sophisticated skills to maintain. In addition, this approach seeks to build on what the people already know, rather than introducing foreign techniques. Costs are to be manageable, and goals able to be realized.

Didier Allely, a project officer for LWR in Niger, recounted the story of one man and his family who participated in the Tahoua Gardens Project. In this account, the reader can see the conditions of life in West Africa and the prospects for self-reliance offered in intensive dry season gardening. This form of agriculture was made possible through LWR's introduction of cement-lined wells that cost about \$300 for a 6-meter-deep well.

Yacoubou Salifou decided to leave his native village of Barzaga in 1978 and move to the valley of Tahou in order to get away from successive droughts that had hit the area. With irrigation of several crops (corn, cowpeas, onions) during the dry season, using traditional wells, he was able to expand his production and begin to meet his family's needs. During the second gardening season, he decided to reinforce two of his traditional wells that never lasted more than a few months. Once the walls were covered with cement, these wells could last three to four years.

In 1981, the first year of the Tahoua Gardening Project, Yacoubou was able to obtain a well from LWR. It seemed that the water supply was resolved. He also received gardening seeds and fruit trees from the project and was thus able to reinforce his dry season activities. In 1984, with the second phase of the Tahoua Gardens Project, he received a steer and an animal traction water lifting system. During that year the catastrophe began with one of the most serious droughts the Sahel has known. In Tahoua the total rainfall was only 236.2 millimeters, preventing any harvest of millet. Yacoubou's millet field, located 20 kilometers from Tahoua, was not spared.

Those to be fed kept growing until it went far beyond the nuclear family. Before the drought, his family included his wife, his six children (Abdoulaye — age 18, Abdouraman — age 13, Moussa — age 10, Rekia — age 7, Sabila — age 4, and Alilou — age 2), his father and his mother. After the death of one of his brothers-in-law, Yacoubou had to assume responsibility for that man's wife and five children. In the hope of earning money and helping his family, his second brother-in-law went to Nigeria, leaving his wife and children with Yacoubou. There has been no word from the brother-in-law.

Besides these 22 people to feed, approximately 25 people from his village came to be added to the list. Hospitality cannot be refused. One day he might be in need himself. In June 1985 with not enough agricultural by-products and millet stalks for feed, Yacoubou's steer died, thus limiting his irrigation potential. The 1985 rainy season in Tahoua was even more disastrous than the preceding year with only 220.4 millimeters. As a result the water table was not recharged. In 3 years, the water level in the wells decreased by 3 or 4 meters.

How could so many people be supported in such a situation? To try to support themselves, Yacoubou and his family accepted any kind of work they could find: brick making, gathering wood to sell in Tahoua, and harvesting hay for those who had the means to buy it. Others went begging on the streets in Tahoua. Yacoubou tried to start another garden in Talabi where the water table was only 3 meters deep. However, the distance of 10 kilometers between the garden and his home made it impossible to maintain the garden correctly. In order to mitigate the problem, LWR carried out an emergency deepening of 86 wells.

Yacoubou's received 3 additional rings of 1 meter each. This allowed him to finish watering the few vegetable plots he had been able to start.

The 1986 rainy season was very good as the valley flooded five times causing the water table to rise considerably. Yacoubou's well now has more than 4 meters of water. His millet harvest turned out, and the sorghum in his garden produced. The family's needs could finally be met. The difficulties Yacoubou encountered have been known by many of the 6 million people in Niger. Today many of them have turned to dry season gardening with the hope of reaching self-sufficiency in food as well as earning additional income.

As for the Tahoua Garden Project as a whole, LWR working with the people accomplished a number of additions. From February 1984 to June of 1986, they constructed 30 wells for gardening and put into place 50 animal traction water lifting systems. A total of 36 gardeners were trained in the growing and grafting of fruit trees. By planting 25,000 trees for live fences, they gained protection for the gardens from wind and erosion. Eighty-three people attended literacy classes for 6 months. Members built a cooperative store with their own donations and received training from LWR.

LWR works under an agreement with the Ministry of Rural Development in Niger, which grants LWR privileges for its staff and duty-free purchase for large items. Each project has its own agreement with the Ministry, detailing responsibilities and other implementing services. LWR regularly works with the Agriculture Service, the Rural Animation Service, the Cooperative Service, and the Forestry Service. Occasionally LWR projects involve the Literacy Service, the Health Service, the Public Roads, and Rural Engineering. Although considered one of the poorest countries during the long Sahelian drought, the technical services are proving to be conscientious and competent in small project implementation. While LWR regards it as important to support the innovative projects, it believes more participation should be exacted from the Government of Niger.

In his book, **The Greening Of Africa: Breaking Through In The Battle For Land And Food**, Paul Harrison offers this assessment of the LWR work in Niger:

... the (garden) projects have improved local incomes and the availability of food, and reduced the need for migration in search of work during the dry season. They have increased the rate of tree planting and reduced soil degradation and the pressure on scarce wood supplies. They have worked a remarkable transformation in their local areas. Fields that were patches of dried grasses and sedum shrubs in the dry season are now lush gardens, thick and green with fruit trees and tall hedges. And they have had a strong influence at the national level in Niger, providing a model for efforts on a far larger scale than a voluntary agency could afford. The Niger government, after the drought of 1983-84, made food self-sufficiency its top priority. The chief means chosen was LWR's approach of dry season gardening with live fences operated by cooperatives. (pages 159-60)

Harrison does point out some of the problems in Niger that come, not so much from the LWR model, but from the hierarchical and bureaucratic structure of the government. Agricultural officials move every two or three years. In addition, they are not always fully committed to the goals of the projects or to the idea of the cooperatives, because these increase the autonomy of the farmers and decrease the power of civil servants. The author also points to an over-emphasis on vegetables such as lettuce, onions, and tomatoes because local markets cannot handle a sudden expansion. This leaves an unsalable surplus. In his *International Institute for Environment and Development—Earthscan Study*, Paul Harrison also contends that there should be a greater emphasis on staple foods — root crops like sweet potatoes or cassava and cereals such as maize, rice, and wheat.

Part III

Contending For The Family Farm In The Hay River Valley

"My name is Char Radintz. My husband Ray and I are dairy farmers in northwestern Wisconsin. We milk 44 cows and try to raise all of their feed on the 220-acre farm that we have worked for the last 10 years. We are what is known as a small family farm — an entity that many politicians of late claim they want to preserve. I am here to speak my piece because I believe that approval of bovine growth hormone (BGH) for use in dairy cows accelerates the demise of the family farm.

"Asking dairy farmers to use BGH is like asking chickens to support Colonel Sanders. The carrot of increased production is laced with strychnine. More product means only one thing — lower prices for our milk. It seems absurd that such a suggestion is even being made, but what will be even more absurd is if dairy farmers do not fight this tooth and nail.

"There is no need for this product. It benefits no one but the people who manufacture and promote it. It is expensive, questionable in its benefits, and has not been studied long enough to determine its safety. We should not approve it for use in dairy animals, but if approval is to be forthcoming, then it is totally irresponsible to allow it without requiring that all milk and dairy products that result from cows injected with it be labeled.

"The American consumers have a right to make that choice just as they have a right to choose a bread without artificial preservatives, or artificial dairy products. If the people promoting this product are so confident of its safety, why do they spend so much money, time, and energy fighting the labeling requirement?"

—Char Radintz, a dairy farmer from Clear Lake, Wisconsin, testifying at a hearing in Osseo, Wisconsin on a proposal to require labeling of milk from cows treated with bovine growth hormone

Gardening For The Food And Fun Of It

In the United States, only a small percentage of the people still live and work on the land; comparatively few people actually make their livelihood from farming. For the rest of us, gardening is the closest we come to tilling the soil. In my case, I was born at Plentywood in northeastern Montana. My dad owned and operated a 120-acre farm near Homestead; many of his relatives farmed in the area. Because the acreage was too small to make a living from raising cattle and growing wheat, the family moved to Story City, Iowa when I was 5. At that point, my experience with the land switched from living in the country and being part of a farm family to living in town and being part of a garden family.

At the age of 8, my dad took me to the hardware store on main street. He asked the owner to take a hand cultivator down from the top shelf. This cultivator had rotating steel blades with teeth that worked up the soil and chopped up the weeds, while the five furrow blades in the back made furrows from one-half to six inches deep. The store owner took the cultivator down from the shelf and gave it to my dad. My dad immediately turned the heavy duty wooden handle toward me and asked, "How does it fit, Lowell?" It was clear from that moment on who was going to cultivate the garden. The whole family worked in the garden, and much of the food we ate came from that plot in the back yard.

Twenty years after the purchase of the hand cultivator when I had completed my college and seminary education and settled down to small town life in northwestern Wisconsin, I went back home for one of my regular visits. Hanging on the wall in the garage was the cultivator; on the floor was a new rear-mounted rotary tiller. I was informed that the power tillage tool required little effort; a gardener only had to walk behind as the machine plowed up sod. When I inquired if the cultivator was being used anymore, my dad told me I was welcome to take it back to Wisconsin. I put a new handle on the hand tool and painted the entire cultivator. This act became a start of gardening on my own for the food and fun of it.

Gardening For The Food Of It

The taste of fresh garden vegetables cannot be beat. As soon as the snow melts in the spring, I dig up parsnips left in the ground over the winter. The freezing improves the texture and gives the vegetable a sweeter, more delicate taste. Tender, juicy stalks of bright, red rhubarb make for deliciously tart — yet sweet — pies, sauces, and cobblers. Long, slender, uniform spears of asparagus go well with a white sauce on toast. By the end of May the first of the garden vegetables planted in middle April start to come. The long wait over the winter is worth it when I fill a large container with the frilly leaves of loose leaf lettuce and enhance the mild flavor with a homemade dressing of mayonnaise, milk, and sugar. For variety, I eat fresh spinach greens with an oil and sesame seed dressing.

Starting in June, I thin the beets and steam the glossy greens. With a pad of butter on top of the beet greens, the combination tastes excellent. Carrots also need to be thinned toward the middle of the month. Many times, I do not wait to wash them, but wipe the dirt off the crisp roots and enjoy a quick snack. When the first peas come, I take the smooth and round peas from the pods and combine them with small carrots in a lettuce salad to make a meal by itself. Small potatoes by the end of June are always a real treat. Creamed potatoes, carrots, and peas on the Fourth of July make the midsummer holiday complete.



Lowell Bolstad stands in his garden at the time it reached mid-July form.

The garden becomes truly productive in July and August. Smooth, extra meaty bush beans with long, plump, green pods keep on bearing. Sweet corn with its mouth watering flavor and bright yellow color goes best eaten right off the cob and also makes a good freezer crop. For about two weeks in August, I pick tomatos and live on bacon, lettuce, and tomato sandwiches. Autumn, too, holds forth good eating. The rich orange flesh of baked sweet potatoes tastes delicious. Delicata squash enables me to continue eating a vegetable with a sweet potato taste into the fall and winter. Late plantings of carrots and potatoes stretches out the gardening season.

Good nutrition is another reason why I do gardening for the food of it. When I grow vegetables, I know what goes into them. Instead of chemical fertilizers, I supply nitrogen to the soil through the addition of composted cow manure from an organic dairy farm as well as the application of well-rotted manure from two Tennessee Walker horses that my wife Robbi keeps at a barn on the edge of town. I plow the manure under with an old front-mounted rotary tiller that I inherited from Robbi's uncle. For heavy feeding perennials, like asparagus and rhubarb, I apply liberal amounts of compost water.

Rather than rely on chemical pesticides for insect control, I employ natural methods: preventing insect problems by growing healthy plants and by keeping the garden clean; planting strongly scented marigolds on the edge of the garden to detract harmful insects and onions among potatoes to ward off potato beetles; hand picking those potato beetles that come; incorporating extra wood ashes to the soil where I plant those vegetables vulnerable to cutworms; and using biological controls in the form of the predaceous ladybug and praying mantis. A few years ago I made limited use of the organic insecticides, Thuricide and Rotenone, but have not employed them since.

In place of chemical herbicides for weed control, I try to prevent weed problems by building up the soil organically. In order to conserve moisture, I cultivate as little as possible with the hand cultivator between rows, mulch with sawdust and grass clippings, and plant rows close together to shade the ground. As for weeds next to plants, there is no substitute for hand picking. In the fall, I plant annual ryegrass so that the root structure crowds out the weeds; ryegrass also works as a valuable green manure. Through the use of these natural methods, I can be assured that the vegetables I eat are free of the various chemicals, which come in the food products from the vegetable factory farms. In addition, I avoid preservatives and additives in freezing vegetables, as well as salt in cooking them.

In addition to the taste and nutrition in gardening for the food of it, a desire for self-sufficiency is a third reason for engaging in this form of tilling the earth. In back of the parsonage in Prairie Farm is a vacant lot, which has worked out as a perfect garden plot. When I first came to the town, I plowed up a space 50' X 100' and divided it into 4 quadrants of 25' X 50' each by planting 2 grass walkways in the form of a cross. In this manner, I plan out the garden and rotate the crops from year to year. I freeze produce to last the winter and give away much of the garden products. Each season brings new learning experiences. Other gardeners stop by and give free advice. Reading guidebooks on organic gardening provides new insights. The act of living in a harmonious balance with the productive ability of the land brings a feeling of deep satisfaction and fulfillment.

Gardening For The Fun Of It

In the process of working the soil, I have discovered the pleasure of gardening for the fun of it. My heart beats faster when I receive the garden catalogues early in the new year. Somehow the winter seems to pass faster in making out the seed orders and anticipating the gardening season. The first crocuses and tulips push their delicate petals up from the ground soon after the snow has melted in April. These harbingers of spring are followed by dozens of daffodils dancing in the sun in May, and irises flutter in the wind like graceful doves in flight. Snow white blooms of peonies on strong, sturdy stems blossom in June.

A collection of tiger lilies give exquisite blooms in June and July. A profusion of orange day lilies keep on coming during July. The gladioli, with their rich, varied colors, are among my most popular because of their versatility as cut flowers for a period of over two months during July, August, and September. Wildflowers, zinnias, dahlias, and annual mixtures provide a variety of blooms. Miniature roses are valued for their fragrance.

Cushion mums on the south side of the house display their fall colors when almost everything else has been hit by cool weather in September. Flowering kale, with its bright white or deep purple colors, remains in the garden into October. With approximately 20 perennial beds arranged in an orderly fashion throughout the lawn and part of a garden quadrant planted in annuals, I take delight in picking cut flowers. The house is filled with bouquets, and many of the flowers are given away.

Gardening is also a spectator sport, and it helps to have a sense of humor. When I first started in Prairie Farm, the word got back to me that half the people thought I was crazy in undertaking a garden of that size and that many flower beds, while the other half took a wait-and-see attitude. When people did see that I knew what I was doing, many would stop to ask questions. One of the most frequently asked came in regards to the planting of sweet potatoes: "What are those trenches for?" I patiently tried to explained to the motorists, who stopped their vehicles in the middle of the street to yell out the question, that I needed to hill up the ground for the plants because they needed extra sunshine. After awhile I became convinced that others in town kept better track of my garden than I. In fact, I was informed by one farmer, "The preacher's garden has become somewhat of a tourist attraction."

Gardening does bring disappointments. I believed the garden catalogues in thinking that I could grow kiwi even in a cold climate. After trying the expensive planting twice, I gave up. Each year I intend to discontinue the planting of broccoli and cauliflower, because it turns bitter on me, only to try one more time. Sometimes the flowers do not come up looking anywhere near as nice as advertised. But the summer of 1988 was particularly difficult. Even though I harvested plenty of food considering the drought conditions, some of the fun was taken out of gardening. Again I was reminded of my dependency on the earth.

Living Through The Drought Of 1988

Who can forget the drought during the summer of 1988? Hot temperatures, strong winds, and a lack of rain made for the most severe drought since the late 1800s and the 1930s. Crops withered and died providing only a fraction of the normal harvests. Farmers were forced to buy feed grains through the winter for their cattle. Many of those already living on the financial edge were compelled to quit farming.

How did farm and rural people respond to the consequences of this drought? In this chapter, I would like you to meet various people who lived through the drought. These people were featured in the *Hay River Review* — a volunteer-operated, monthly community newspaper serving Prairie Farm, Ridgeland, and surrounding area — of which I serve as the editor. These people demonstrated different ways of facing up to this difficult situation. Some looked back at the dry years of the 1930s in order to see how people lived through a drought. Willis Norberg, of Prairie Farm, was one of those.

Willis Norberg Recalls The Dry 1930s

"The 1930s were hot and dry. It was bad from 1930 to 1936 with 1934 a real bad year. The drought ended on the 23rd of July in 1936, and then we had a wet fall," Willis Norberg explained. Farmers did not have much grain, hay, or corn, according to Norberg. Most of the corn went for silage then. Without much alfalfa, farmers relied on clover and timothy. "Sometimes you could see the dust in the air blown from the Dakotas," Norberg said. "After the dust bowl, farmers began to plant shelter belts."

"In Wisconsin," Norberg remembered, "everybody plowed up and down the hills." This resulted in substantial washing and gullies of the dusty soil when the rains came. Afterwards the government helped to pay for contour strips and waterways. In addition the government instituted a lime program in order to build up the alfalfa crops in what Norberg regarded as an especially helpful effort.

During the 1930s, some farmers took part in the Holiday Association. "There was milk dumping around here and in Dunn County. It was their only resort because they had their backs to the wall," Norberg stated. Dairy farmers received \$.30 a pound for butterfat and \$.05 a pound for cows, while hog farmers got \$.03 a pound for pigs. "Farmers took what the market would give," Norberg said. Conditions improved for farmers, though, in the late 1930s and during the 1940s. Norberg credits the war economy for giving subsidies to farmers in order to raise the production of milk.

"Then in April of 1952, when farmers were just getting on their feet, President Dwight Eisenhower and Secretary of Agriculture Ezra Taft Benson lowered the price of milk from \$4.80 to \$2.89," Norberg recounted. "This action set farmers back 25 years. Some farmers went to Washington in 1954 to protest the low prices paid to farmers. The government did not want farmers to control food prices. Nobody in Washington listened to the farmers, so they came back and started the National Farmers Organization (NFO). We were with NFO for awhile."

Norberg believes farmers have it tougher than in the dry 1930s. "With bigger herds, they have a high debt load and must pay out more for taxes and insurance. The FmHA

induced farmers to buy more equipment and produce more food and then let them down," Norberg maintained. Norberg also pointed out how consumers are pitted against farmers, and farm organizations often do not work together. "The housewife wants cheap food prices," Norberg stated. "And the farm organizations have been fighting with each other for the last 30 to 40 years."

Willis Norberg contends that food is the only real security. "When you get up in the morning, the one thing you need more than anything else is food," Norberg asserted. He believes something is wrong when the government pays \$1 billion for new bombers, and nothing is said, while the government spends \$ one half billion on price supports for farmers, and people want to see those eliminated.

"My dad used to say that you can't pull yourself up by your boot straps. With farmers as disorganized as they are, and the consumer desiring cheap food, the only alternative I see is to have government help," Norberg concluded.

Drought Does Not Shake Faith In Each Other

The drought also caused people to look inward to examine the faith questions and outward to discover the personal relationships. Char Radintz, of Clear Lake, takes the reader through an exercise with the following piece from her *A Hay River Notebook* column.

Gone are the days when one can bring up the weather to have a safe and superficial exchange of pleasantries. The subject has become loaded with potential and already-realized pain. To talk about the weather these days is to talk about anxiety and fear. Already some good friends have shared the sad news that they will be selling their herd of cows for lack of sufficient feed. After several years of struggle, there are no reserves to absorb this latest blow. Other farm families juggle their dwindling resources, always hoping, that things will improve next year.

I don't know what is worse; the unrelenting sunshine for days on end, or the tantalizing promise of scattered showers that hit and miss with capricious, blind luck. How depressing it is to watch a storm system moving in from the west, and then part, like the Red Sea in Exodus, scattering the rain to the north and south, once more leaving our area high and dry.

One day it seemed all but certain we would get rain. The wind blew strong and steady from the east all day. I sat by the stream watching the trees swaying; their branches like giant arms beckoning, beseeching the skies for refreshment and relief. I would have sworn that I could smell rain in the wind, but the promising clouds refused to release their precious burden that day. The trees and I slumped into a dejected immobility.

Whenever the forecast is announced, I listen in tense silence, eager for news that the jet stream is returning to its normal pattern; that the huge high pressure ridge that has dominated the center of the country for months, will weaken and lose its arid grip. Some experts tell us that what is needed is some strong tropical disturbance, like a hurricane, to hit the Gulf with enough force to penetrate and break up the high pressure ridge. I feel guilty entertaining such a hope, knowing the havoc it would entail.

It is a cruel irony to have such perfect hay-making weather, but no hay to make. Still, here in our area, we have been thus far blest with enough rainfall to keep our crops, and thus, our hopes alive. The sudex Ray planted this spring will yield one sure cutting. Our two small alfalfa fields down in front of the house have a second crop.

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Other fields, on hillsides are not faring as well, but with some moisture, there may yet be a second cutting. The corn is beginning to show signs of stress, but it wouldn't take too much more rain to, at least, make silage. For others, the prospects are much bleaker. Major crop failure is forcing liquidation in many areas of the farm belt.

When I begin to feel depressed and anxious, I try to gain some perspective by remembering the people of West Africa, and the drought that has devastated their land for seventeen years. Whatever hardships we might endure seem insignificant when compared with that. In times like these, it is meaningless to talk of good managers and bad managers, or survival of the fittest. That may be the rule of the jungle, but it need not be the rule by which we live. We are all in this together, and while our faith in nature's abiding generosity has been briefly shaken, our faith in each other need not be. Let us pray for rain, and in its absence, let us pray for and support each other.

Both the previous composition by Char Radintz and the following story on Janet Nelson speak of the importance of people needing each other more than ever. A drought has a way of showing the weakness of individualism and the strength of interdependence.

Farm Leader Believes People Need To Come Together During Drought

Janet Nelson, of Prairie Farm, thinks that the drought is a crucial time for farm people. "In this crisis, it is more important than ever to come together. Farmers need to give each other moral support," Nelson stated. The lack of rain has Nelson worried; she is afraid that many farmers will not have enough feed for their cattle and may have to sell out. Nelson contends that, with \$10 a cwt. for milk and with taxes to pay, many farmers will have some tough decisions to make.

"What government is not taking away, the drought is," added Nelson, who is active in Wisconsin Farmers Union (WFU). The past eight years have been very discouraging for Nelson. "Washington, D.C. is trying to do away with a way of life that may never come back." In the midst of the drought, she believes that farmers need to come together around a program to balance supply with demand. Nelson would like to see people get more involved in farm organizations and political parties in order to make this happen.

Organizational and political involvement has always been important for Nelson. She started going to WFU locals with her husband Julian in 1960. In 1970-71 she became more deeply involved. "Muriel Nedland and I went to a fly-in to Washington, D.C. for lobbying. After that I started going to state meetings, and in 1979 I was elected to the WFU state board," Nelson explained.

This past year Nelson was selected to represent Wisconsin on the National Farmers Union Dairy Council. On February 5-6, 1988, Nelson ran for the state board of Wisconsin Farmers Union Milk Marketing Cooperative. She lost in a relatively close race to the incumbent. The marketing organization is concerned with stabilizing membership and affecting dairy policy. Janet Nelson summed up her attitude, "It is important to be active, whether it be farm organizations or politics, 4-H or the church. Nobody is too busy not to become involved."

In the final article, a demonstration of sustainable agriculture practices shows that some farming methods are more effective than others in growing crops amid dry conditions.

Pete Edstrom Attributes 134-Bushel Corn In A Dry Year To The Use Of Sustainable Agriculture Practices

Pete Edstrom, of Ridgeland, believes his use of sustainable agriculture practices over the years paid off this fall. "I am very excited about getting 134 bushels of corn to the acre in this drought year," Edstrom said. Earlier in the summer, he had expected that the yields would be more in the range of 60 to 80 bushels per acre. But the fields produced beyond what he ever thought possible — considering the growing conditions where the fields received only 4 inches of effective moisture.

Pete Edstrom and his wife Judy hosted a sustainable agriculture project demonstration at their farm on October 12 at which time Pete spoke of his project and his farming practices. The purpose of the project was to demonstrate the use of both composted and raw manure as the only source of fertilizer for producing corn. In addition, Edstrom wanted to show the use of reduced herbicide and no herbicide weed control, as well as preparation of sod ground by means of conservation tillage methods. Overall, he sought to determine crop yields while using minimum input of labor and materials.

At the project demonstration, Edstrom recounted how he planted two varieties of corn on his creek plot field off of County Road V west of Ridgeland. One was an 80-day single cross pedigreed corn, while the other was a 90-day open pollinated crossed with a single cross. The plot had a history of corn in 1984, oats in 1985, and a mixture of clover, grass, and hay in 1986 and 1987. Tight crop rotations are part of his secret in controlling weeds. Edstrom fertilized the plot with approximately 20 tons of composted manure and 25 tons of raw manure to the acre. No other fertilizers were used.

Manure was chisel plowed in the end of October, while half of the raw manure was spread in the spring of 1988. Seven or eight years ago, Edstrom threw away his moldboard plow. Last fall, he used a disk and a digger before manure was applied. In the spring, the land was redug and disked before planting.

On May 15, he planted his corn in 40" rows at 26,000 seeds to the acre. Edstrom accomplished his weed control with two rotary hoeings on May 28 and June 6 and two cultivations on June 16 and June 24. No spray was used. "We were pleased to be able to raise this corn for just over \$1.00 a bushel in a drought year," Edstrom stated. Purchased inputs amounted to a third of a bag of seed corn per acre and 8.5 gallons of fuel per acre and \$10.00 to the acre on depreciation on equipment. He figured in noncash inputs at the rate of \$15.00 per acre on the value of manure. A land charge of \$30.00 and harvesting at \$20.00 rounded out the costs per acre.

The savings, according to Edstrom, comes in the fact that he did not use 100# of anhydrous, 150# of starter, and 5# of chemicals. These, he estimated, would add 20 gallons equivalent of energy in the form of #2 diesel fuel. "Low input corn does not necessarily reduce fuel consumption in field operations. Rather the real savings in energy comes from reducing purchased inputs," Edstrom asserted. Edstrom pointed to the noncash costs of raising corn through the use of chemicals as the reason that caused him to reduce inputs and to rotate crops. These include herbicide carryover, erosion, scarcity of time in the spring, maintaining alfalfa stands, and feed quality in long rotation hay.

Edstrom achieved his 134 bushels per acre with the 90-day open pollinated crossed with a single cross corn and the use of raw manure. The 90-day corn yielded 98 bushels per acre with composted manure. The 80-day single cross pedigreed corn yielded 86 bushels per acre with the raw manure.

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On fields fertilized with composted manure, the 80-day corn brought 62 bushels per acre. Edstrom explained that, because of the drought conditions, the corn planted on the fields fertilized with composted manure did not do as well as the fields with raw manure. "Compost stimulates early rooting, while raw manure inhibits rooting. The compost side had more height and foliage and therefore suffered more in August. This year, the shorter corn put out more grain," Edstrom stated.



Pete Edstrom shares the results of his sustainable agriculture project in comparing the results of raw manure and composted manure in growing corn.

The 80-day corn was used for a marker corn to be sure he would have ripe corn early; the 90-day corn was planted to produce a higher yielding grain. "We believe open pollinates and waxy types to be superior feed, as well as to be good worker corns that root down early for soil feeding — not row feeding on fertilizer," Edstrom asserted. The plot has not seen commercial fertilizer or soil amendments since 1976. Edstrom even harvested a pumpkin that came from seed in the manure. "It is interesting what some of the benefits of not spraying can be," Edstrom pointed out.

Composted manure is rotted by allowing it to be piled for 45 days. It is turned once with a bulldozer, then allowed to heat and decay for 45 additional days before spreading and incorporating with a chisel plow. Edstrom cited a number of benefits for composting manure: the ability to destroy weed seeds, store manure cheaply, reduce volume by 30% to 40% for hauling, fall spread rather than spring spread, and reduce winter runoff from manure spread on frozen ground.

He took on the sustainable agriculture project in order to measure the fertility of the composted manure and to assess the effect in later years on tilth, soil structure, and weed control. Edstrom is not necessarily sold on compost, but he believes that manure and waste management skills are something that will be needed for the future. Edstrom is sold on the practice of sustainable agriculture. "This project demonstrates that it is possible to raise respectable crops without the use of a lot of purchased inputs," Pete Edstrom concluded.

Tackling Rural Issues On The Local Level

Farmers in the Hay River Valley show how the struggle to preserve the family farm is carried out on the local level. This chapter offers a number of examples of how concerned people are tackling rural issues. Various farm groups realize they share a common concern in identifying those areas that threaten the family farm and in carrying out a fight for the family farm. Many of these reports were originally published in the *Hay River Review*.

Area Farmers Take Part In Farmers Union Hearing

Muriel Nedland, who farms north of Prairie Farm with her husband LaVern, encouraged greater citizen involvement in the making of farm policy when she testified at the Wisconsin Farmers Union (WFU) hearing in Chippewa Falls on October 14. "More farmers should take advantage of the opportunity to participate in letting the Congress know the type of farm policies we need in the future. We need to start these discussions now, or all the decisions will be made for us by those who stand to gain from continued low farm commodity prices," Nedland stated.

At the hearing in Chippewa Falls, farmers spoke for major changes in farm legislation. All who testified favored a supply-management system that would raise the prices farmers receive for milk, while limiting production. The hearing was one of four hosted throughout the state by the Wisconsin Farmers Union study committee and legislative committee in an effort to get ideas for replacing the 1985 farm legislation currently in effect.

WFU president Dennis Rosen of Emerald stated, "We need to draft agricultural policy that will result in a just and sustainable family-sized agriculture, using a reduced federal outlay." Rosen disagrees with the policy of the current administration in Washington that favors a free market approach. "We believe government will always be, either directly or indirectly, involved in agricultural policy," Rosen stated.

In November, the study committee will meet with key resource people who will present different approaches to farm policy. Ideas will be discussed dealing with four areas: farm structure, income, environment, and rural communities. The study committee has developed a statement supporting "public policy that promotes family-sized farms where a major portion of the management and labor is provided by family members with adequate income to insure a competitive return for capital, land, and management while promoting and preserving a safe, wholesome, clean environment in rural communities with equal access to goods and services on a par with society as a whole."

Northwestern Wisconsin is represented by the following people on the 15-member study committee: Judy Ahlberg, Almena; John Ruemele, Hudson; Wayne Dodge, Ellsworth; and Marjorie Meyer, Eau Claire. Janet Nelson of Prairie Farm — a member of the National Farmers Union Dairy Policy Committee, WFU legislative committee, and WFU state board — serves as an advisor to the study group.

Nelson expressed hope that suggestions coming out of these hearings, the study committee, and state convention could then have a major impact at the organization's national convention next spring. "Farmers need to realize that on a national level people look to Wisconsin to take the leadership in developing new dairy policy, as we are still the dairy state," Nelson said.

County Farm Organizations Unified Against BGH

Barron County Farm Bureau, Barron County Farmers Union, and Hay River Chapter of Wisconsin Farm Unity Alliance have come out in favor of a proposal that would require dairy products made from milk from cows treated with bovine growth hormone (BGH) to be labeled. In addition, the NFO state convention voted to call for a ban on BGH.

The issue is heating up as the hormone is scheduled for commercial sale within 18 months. As yet, no state or national government agency has made a definitive judgement about how BGH itself or the milk from cows treated with BGH will be regulated. BGH has been in the news lately as the Senate Agricultural committee held hearings in Osseo, Wisconsin on a proposal by State Senator Russ Feingold to require labeling of milk from cows treated by BGH. Spokespersons from American Cyanamid, one of the manufacturers of BGH, and Wisconsin Farm Bureau spoke in opposition to the labeling proposal.

Four area farmers testified in support of the labeling proposal. "Consumers are wising up," Char Radintz, of Clear Lake, told the committee. "Hormones are not innocuous. Birth control pills were said to be safe. What were they but hormones? And they were found to cause cancer and all sorts of other serious medical complications. It takes many years to find out the health implications. Consumers know this and they are going to distrust one of the purest foods out there." Tom Saunders, of Prairie Farm, and Pete Edstrom, of Ridgeland, expressed concern for the security of the market for Wisconsin milk. "Some of us will never benefit economically from the use of BGH," Edstrom added. "The chemical companies producing BGH thus far have hidden much of their research from public scrutiny," Janet Nelson said. "If they're as proud of their product as they profess to be, they should welcome and endorse Senator Feingold's proposed legislation."

There were two other hearings, one in Oshkosh on September 28 and one in Madison on October 6. The story was similar to the one in Osseo, with chemical companies, University of Wisconsin, Federation of Coops, and state leadership of Farm Bureau testifying in opposition, and with consumers, individual farmers, Farmers Union, and Farm Unity Alliance in support. BGH was again at the center of the controversy when the Legislative Council's Biotechnology Committee heard testimony from five people who voiced reservations about the development of biotechnology. One committee member stated afterwards, "In the face of over-production, this is an unwarranted technology." The issue promises to be a hot one when the legislature comes into session in January.

Experts are not sure if synthetic BGH is safe. John Kinsman, a dairy farmer from Lime Ridge who has researched BGH extensively, said, "No studies have been made on the safety of synthetic BGH. It could be a health hazard for certain groups of people." Kinsman works with the Wisconsin Family Farm Defense Fund. Scientists are also concerned about potential health hazards to the cows themselves. Although studies at Cornell University reported no health problems in initial tests, these studies did not track BGH over several lactations.

John Kurtz, a Minnesota dairy farmer who has tested BGH, told *Dairy Herd Management* magazine that his cows experienced a high number of multiple births, endangering his herd's health. He says he is unsure if he would use BGH if it became commercially available. Moreover, a University of Pennsylvania study reported higher incidence of mastitis, reduced immunity to disease, and persistent reproductive problems in cows injected with BGH. David Kronfeld, who led the study, estimates that mastitis alone could cost dairy farmers an additional \$1.5 billion per year nationally.

A spokesperson for the firms that hope to produce BGH (Monsanto, Elanco, American Cyanamid, and Upjohn) maintains that synthetic BGH is safe. It is "virtually identical" to a hormone produced by the cow herself, said David Petrick, a veterinarian with Cyanamid. He said scientists have no chemical way of detecting synthetic from natural hormones in milk. To dairy farmer Pete Edstrom, of Ridgeland, however, the lack of a good test is a "compelling reason for BGH labeling." The labeling bill, Kinsman said, "gives consumers a choice and protects those producers who wish to maintain a high quality product."

Senator Russ Feingold, who proposed the BGH labeling bill, concluded that the "true beneficiaries of BGH will end up being the four chemical companies who hold the patents on the drug and who anticipate anywhere from \$100 to \$500 million in yearly profits." Feingold said his labeling proposal is the first such measure to be introduced in the U.S. He adds, however, that the European Parliament banned BGH in July. Labeling BGH products, he said, would require a separate trucking and processing system for treated milk. Feingold said that, if the state did need more milk, better ways of increasing dairy production already exist. The ongoing Dairy Herd Improvement Association (DHIA) program, he said, successfully increases milk production an average of 4,500 pounds of milk per cow per year — far more than BGH would. Still, he said, "only 45% of the state's farmers now enroll in DHIA."

A University of Wisconsin study, done by agriculture economist Bruce Marion, concluded that BGH would likely improve milk output in the state only 6%. But that would be enough to force prices down another 50 cents/cwt, he said, which in turn could force small operations out of business. All told, Marion's study concluded, Wisconsin farmers would gain a few dollars of income in the first few years, but would lose \$100 million per year in the fifth and following years.

Farm Bureau Annual Meeting Supports BGH Labeling Law

The annual meeting of the Barron County Farm Bureau, held in Rice Lake on October 11, featured local resolutions addressing highway and milk handling issues, as well as passage of one favoring the labeling of milk containing artificial bovine growth hormone (BGH). According to Arne Thompson, of Dallas, who introduced the resolution to require BGH labeling, there were only a couple of dissenting votes on this question. Farm Bureau members also passed the following county resolutions: to encourage school boards and personnel to strengthen and specialize agricultural programs; to request that the Department of Transportation build the Highway 8 bypass around Barron rather than widen the existing roadway; to ask that the Highway 53 speed limit be raised to 65 m.p.h.; to commend the county board for freezing spending; and to teach and reward better handling of milk products to food service personnel. Members passed two state resolutions: to save the Farmland Preservation program and to take the school tax off the property tax.

Farmers Give Away Milk To Low-Income Consumers

Months of low dairy prices have pushed a group of Wisconsin farmers to give their milk away to low-income consumers. "Millions of low-income families in this country cannot even afford to buy enough milk," said Curt Rohland, vice president of Wisconsin Farm Unity Alliance (WFUA), and a dairy farmer near Withee. "And millions of dairy farmers in this country can't afford to produce milk. Something is dead wrong with the food system." Although dairy prices nudged upward in the past few weeks, dairy farmers say the increase does not begin to compensate for the added costs of feed they shoulder due to the drought. The milk price still hovers near 50% of parity, and thousands of Wisconsin dairy farmers are unsure if they can hold on.

So, farmers will offer their milk — for free — to low-income consumers in Milwaukee and Minneapolis later this month. Rohland said the giveaway will educate urban people about the need for long-term government policies that set fair farm prices and assure high-quality milk supplies to consumers. He added that farmers and consumers need to be in direct contact with each other, and the giveaway is one way to do this. "Processors are squeezing us at both ends," Rohland said. "We're practically giving our milk away as it is. We might as well give it directly to those who need it most."

Recent federal actions have also hurt low-income people, Rohland added. "At the beginning of the month, the Commodity Credit Corporation exhausted all of its surplus stocks of dry milk and cheese," Rohland said. "That means less for schools and food shelves. It means low-income people will go hungry." Farmers and consumers alike are also threatened by a new biotechnology product bovine growth hormone, Rohland said. The hormone could have a harmful health and economic impact, he added. The milk that Rohland and other farmers will give away will be labeled *BGH-free*.

The Milwaukee giveaway will take place at the Hillside Terrace, North 7th St. and West Walnut, on October 19 at 11:30 a.m. It is co-sponsored by Wisconsin Action Coalition. The Minneapolis giveaway will take place at the Sabathani Community Center, 338 East 38th St., on October 26 at 11:00 a.m. This event will feature Father Al LaPinto, national director for the Campaign for Human Development, a Catholic social justice campaign based in Washington, D.C. Co-sponsors are the Archdioceses of St. Paul, Winona, and LaCrosse; Women, Work, and Welfare, a Minneapolis women's organization; and Minnesota rural groups Groundswell, Minnesota COACT, and the League of Rural Voters.

Wisconsin Farm Unity Alliance To Hold House Meetings

Local chapters of Wisconsin Farm Unity Alliance will be holding house meetings around the state before the November election. As part of Farm Unity's *Rural Vote 1988* campaign, congressional candidates have been polled on important rural issues, including health care, education, community development, and farm policy. The results of these polls will be taken to the meetings where farmers can then discuss which candidates they will support. A British Broadcasting Corporation documentary on bovine growth hormone will also be shown at the meetings. Dan and Kathy Yurista will host a meeting on November 1 at 8:00 p.m. at their home located two miles northeast of Prairie Farm.

Drought Package Offers Relief To Dairy Farmers

Wisconsin farmers put forth a groundbreaking drought relief program at legislative hearings in Madison on December 6. Under the proposal, dairy farmers would be assured that part of their milk check could be used for family living and farm operating expenses, even if creditors have a claim against the milk check. Such claims, called "assignments," often prevent farmers from qualifying for emergency financing.

"This will help a lot of farmers," said Wally Leuder, a dairy farmer near Neosho. "Many of them don't even see their milk checks anymore," he said, "since lenders take their payments first." Leuder, who also volunteers as a state farm credit advisor, said he works with many families who are barely scraping by. "All they have in the house are generic corn flakes, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, and milk," he said. "That is all they are eating, because they get nothing out of their milk check."

The proposal, announced at a joint Senate agriculture and banking committee hearing was drafted by Wausau attorney Terry Byrne. It is backed by Wisconsin Farm Unity

Alliance, the Wisconsin Rural Development Center, and five other rural groups. The farmers' drought relief proposal recommends that farm families who are strapped because of dry weather should have the right to have money released from their milk checks to pay for emergency feed rations, family living costs, and other essential operating expenses.

Under the measure, a maximum of 30% of a farmer's milk check could be considered a mandatory or *perfected* assignment by lenders, except in the case of feed or crop loans. Above that limit, farmers would have the right to cancel the assignment if funds were needed for emergency feed or family living expenses. Leuder thinks the measure is needed since many creditors now require farmers to sign loan agreements that turn over *all proceeds* from the cows as security for a loan. "Just because a lender finances the purchase of the cows, that should not give the lender the legal right to all the milk produced by those cows," Lueder said, "especially if the farmer can't afford to buy grain to feed the animals."

Wisconsin Farm Unity Alliance director Tom Quinn, of Glenwood City, said milk check assignment reform is needed to balance the rights of farmers and lenders. "This proposal will push both farmers and lenders to be more realistic," he said. "While farmers who are in poor financial condition will still face foreclosure, this plan will at least allow them to live and farm with dignity while they are still on the land." Quinn argued before the hearing that economic conditions created by the drought justify the need for significant reforms. "Even the most conservative estimates from the agriculture department show that Wisconsin farmers will lose over \$1 billion," he said, "even after all the drought relief payments are received." "Small town businesses who extend credit to farmers will be especially hurt by this loss of income," he added. "We need to find ways to spread the cost of the drought," he said. "This proposal balances the needs of the whole rural community."

Farm Support Group Takes On Fare Share Project

Five or ten years ago, if you would have mentioned support groups for farmers, people might have looked incredulously at you. The need for these was thought to be an urban phenomenon. Supposedly city people, living in a mobile society being cut off from close relationships with relatives and neighbors, and desiring help to handle the special problems of life, needed this kind of participation.

Welcome to rural Wisconsin. On the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month, 25 farmers gather for a support group in Glenwood City. According to organizer Carol Harsh, members of the group come from Knapp, Boyceville, Emerald, Deer Park, Baldwin, as well as Glenwood City. "By sharing ideas of what is working, people who have been through the difficulties of the farm crisis can share with others," Harsh said.

If you ask Harsh about the assertion by some political figures that the farm crisis is over, she will answer with a resounding "No!" She counters such suggestions by pointing to farmers who have no money coming in from their milk checks. "Some are becoming vegetarians because they will not butcher their meat. They literally do not have meat to put in a bowl of soup. Instead they get by on vegetables from their gardens and occasional commodity distributions. Because of the depreciation on their machinery, they are not eligible for food stamps," Harsh explained.

Chuck and Mary Dow, members of the group, organized the first site of Fare Share in Glenwood City. The two carried the project almost single handedly for awhile, and then Chuck urged the group to take it over. He thought the project would provide a good way for the group to serve to the whole rural community. With a grant from the Bremer Foun-

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dation and the American Bank in Colfax, the support group and its sponsoring organization, Wisconsin Farm Unity Alliance, was able to expand the project.

According to Carol Harsh, the Fare Share coordinator, the project grew so rapidly that, within 1.5 years, over 8,000 packets were distributed in 45 locations throughout northwestern Wisconsin. Fare Share is a cooperative grocery buying network that each month offers people the opportunity to pay \$13 and do 2 hours of volunteer community service and receive a grocery packet worth \$28 to \$35. *Share* stands for *self-help and resource exchange*. A typical Fare Share package weighs 35-40#, and consists of 3 to 4 kinds of frozen meats, 3 to 4 kinds of fresh vegetables, 3 to 5 kinds of fresh fruits, plus 3 to 4 staples, such as rice, pasta, peanut butter, oatmeal, spaghetti sauce, and vitamins.

Area Farm Family To Help Start A Nicaraguan Dairy Project

Craig Adams and Lucy Altemus and their children, Erin, Sam, and Louis, of Glenwood City, will be heading for Nicaragua on September 15. They have volunteered to live and work at the Idelfonso Montoya Cooperative near Matiguas, Nicaragua for a year or more as part of the nonprofit Farmer To Farmer dairy and friendship project. In so doing, they will offer special skills in dairy production, crop production, dairy building construction, artificial insemination, machinery maintenance, and community development.

Adams explained that Farmer To Farmer was formed in response to inquiries from UNAG, a Nicaraguan independent farm organization that represents large and small agriculturalists and cattle producers. As a result of the meetings, there was a shared recognition of mutual problems facing farmers in the U.S. and in other countries. Some of these problems include: low commodity prices, high debt load, disappearance of the small family farm, over-use of pesticides and chemicals, and environmental destruction. "Nicaragua represents an opportunity for the resurgence of small family farming. It has demonstrated through its land reform policies, human development initiatives, and investment in rural development that positive change is possible," Adams pointed out.

Altemus added, "This project will not only provide Nicaraguans with greatly needed milk but it can also help bridge the gap between the *have nots* in the South and the *haves* in the North and all the cultural stereotypes that go along with it. We are not going to Nicaragua to tell them how they should develop. We are going there to assist, to stand alongside them in their struggle to develop themselves. We fully believe that in doing so, when we return to the U.S., we will bring back as many or more ideas and cultural *gifts* that we desperately need to enlighten our culture."

The cooperative is only two years old. People live on 700 acres of rich, tillable land and graze 142 steers that they bought with a loan from the National Development Bank. They sold some of the cattle and purchased 23 head of milking cows with calves. The \$200, which the Farmer To Farmer project gave, and a large donation from a Danish coffee picking brigade went into the purchase. Each cow and calf cost an average of \$173.00. The cooperative is in need of a milk separator, veterinary, and animal handling equipment.

Members of the Farmer To Farmer project helped the family to convert an old school bus into a camper. According to Altemus, "We chose to drive rather than fly because it is much cheaper, and we can carry more of the necessities we will need at the cooperative. The bus will be useful as a place for us to live until permanent quarters can be built, and we can donate it to the coop for their transportation needs." They will be stopping in Quatamala for 8 weeks of intensive Spanish training before going on to Nicaragua.

Driving down with the family in order to help prepare the site for the arrival of the family will be Dan Yurista, of Prairie Farm, and Paul Webster, of Emerald. Webster, a development planner, has experience in living, traveling, and farming in Central America, as well as a fluency in Spanish.

Paul and his wife Roxanne, a nursing home social worker, together with Altemus, made an extensive survey of the 24-member cooperative last February. Paul Webster told how the government has been bankrupted from the fighting against the contras. In addition, inflation has eaten up much of the money earmarked for development. "If these farmers are to succeed in their dream of retaining their land, improving it, and handing it down to their children, they will need international help. We will be assessing our financial and technical capabilities in light of what is needed and wanted by the cooperative," Webster stated.

Farmer To Farmer has the objective of working with the dairy cooperative to help them utilize modern, ecologically sound, and sustainable methods to increase milk production. The milk will help to increase protein intake in local diets and thus improve infant and child health and lower mortality rates. Making these farmers economically viable will help ensure their family security and establish family farming as an institution in Nicaragua.

Planting In The Dust To Be Performed In Glenwood City

Soil erosion, drought, groundwater contamination, and farmland loss to development as seen through the eyes of a young Wisconsin farm woman are dramatized in the popular one-woman, one-act play *Planting In The Dust* to be presented at Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Glenwood City on Sunday, March 19 at 2:00 p.m. The play, which has been performed more than 300 times for both urban and rural audiences, is being presented in a state-wide tour by the Wisconsin Humanities Committee and the Land Stewardship Project — an ecumenical nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering a stewardship ethic toward the soil and water resources. Professional actress Joan Lisi is featured in the play, which will be followed by a discussion led by a Wisconsin Humanities Scholar.

"The future of family farming in Wisconsin will depend on good stewardship of the gifts of good soil, water, and diversified farming operations," said Ron Kroese, Director of the Land Stewardship Project. "It has become increasingly clear that all of us — farmers and nonfarmers alike — have a responsibility to see that these gifts remain for generations to come. Unfortunately, as a nation, we are currently falling short of that responsibility," Kroese continued. "Soil erosion is threatening the long-term productivity of much of the land, chemical misuse is polluting surface and ground water, and the best stewards of the land — small, diversified family farmers — are being threatened with extinction."

Kroese said the play deals with these problems and raises questions about individual and societal responsibility for land stewardship. In dramatic fashion, the play describes what farmers and the land has been through over the past 100 years — from the homesteading by European immigrants, through the Dust Bowl of the 1930s, the high rolling land boom of the 1970s, to the current farm crisis and drought of the 1980s.

Jesse Jackson Comes To A Farm Near Amery

As part of his bid for president during the Wisconsin primary campaign, Jesse Jackson spoke to a crowd of 3,000 people on a farm near Amery. Char Radintz attended the rally and shared the experience in her *A Hay River Notebook* column.

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Much has already been written about Reverend Jesse Jackson's visit to our area on April 1. To some, it represented a *feather in their cap*. To others, a chance to see and hear a major national celebrity. For Ray and me, it was an experience we will never forget. Good Friday dawned gloriously bright and warm, after a week of grey skies and damp, chilly days. The big storm headed our way was stalled somewhere to the west, giving us the most beautiful day we could ever have hoped for. Relegating our morning chores to others, our family set out early. We had heard that 5,000 might attend, and we wanted to get close enough to see and hear.

Arriving an hour before the program was to begin, we felt at once a sense of holiday spirits and of building excitement. Friends and strangers alike waved to and greeted each other. It was a strange dichotomy — here we were at a local dairy farm, as safe and familiar as home, yet all around us were the secret service, state troopers, local sheriff's deputies, and of course, the media. All the same, people seemed to take it in stride.

As the crowd swelled gradually but steadily to hundreds, and then to nearly 3,000, a sense of family reunion emerged. I wanted to know all of those people who, like us, had rearranged their day to come. I was torn between the desire to mingle and my determination to hold onto my place about 25 feet from the *stage*, a flat-bed hay wagon. Our children, unaccustomed to crowds, nevertheless seemed relaxed and content to stay put, just behind the roped-off area directly in front of the speaker's platform. When it was finally announced that the Reverend Jackson had arrived, Native Americans from the St. Croix and Lac Court Oreilles tribes drummed and sang a moving and powerful greeting.

But it wasn't until Jesse Jackson spoke that the real magic began to work. We stood surrounded by children. Those same children, who had waited patiently for two hours, remained quiet and attentive while he spoke, without notes, without props of any sort, for nearly an hour. He began quietly, prayerfully, reminding us that it was Good Friday. He spoke of the pain and abandonment represented in the crucifixion; of renewal and resurrection and of growing sense of hope, and family, in our gathering. He spoke of injustice, past and present; of racism, then and now; and of economic violence against farmers and workers.

And while he was speaking, something beautiful was happening all around me. A weather-beaten farmer in his 60s, standing to my right, had tears on his cheeks. A well-dressed woman on my left clutched her husband's hand tightly and then grabbed mine briefly and squeezed it. When he spoke of the power in our loving each other, I felt that love. When he spoke of the growing sense of family reunion, I could see and feel it all around me. And I know I was not alone in that feeling.

Racial barriers collapsed. Cynicism dissolved in a flood of goodwill that took us beyond our separateness and our brokenness. We the people came together, and we the people rediscovered a sense of the truer, broader community. And in the discovery we felt a wave of hope and a sense of our power restored. What happened that day went beyond politics, beyond an individual's personal ambition to become president. Jesse Jackson reminded us of who we are at our best. He restored our faith in ourselves and in each other. He may have won a lot of votes that day, but more importantly, he won our respect and our affection. He won. We won. We all were winners that day.

In order to carry out the work to collapse racial barriers, a number of farm and rural families hosted children from Mississippi the following summer. Pam Saunders tells that story.

Area Families Host Children From Mississippi

Among the masses of tanned little bodies splashing and swimming at the Prairie Farm beach this summer, there has been a sprinkling of dark brown little bodies joining in the fun. Fifteen children from Mississippi are spending three weeks with several families in the Prairie Farm, Ridgeland, Colfax, Clear Lake, and Boyceville areas as part of a program called Project Self-Help and Awareness (PSA).

The child exchange program began in 1968 in response to an interest on the part of some black Mississippi families in having their children learn about northern white people. Since then, the lives of many black and white children and their families have been enriched by the cultural exchange. According to John Kinsman, of Lime Ridge, a dairy farmer and organizer of the project, "This program has been particularly successful in working with children because prejudices are more easily broken and prevented in the young."



Chris Theorin, of Prairie Farm, and Freddy Travis, of Tchula, Mississippi, unload hay bales at the Theorin farm.

Cindy Theorin, of Boyceville, a dairy farmer and local coordinator for the program, stated, "For many of these kids, their interaction with white people has been largely negative. They may avoid white people, or they may have misconceptions about whites, such as thinking that all white people are wealthy. We are trying to give these kids a positive experience with white people."

One host parent said, "Living in such a predominantly white community, I appreciate the opportunity for my children to see for themselves that the differences among people are far less important than the things we have in common." For another family, hosting a Mississippi child provided a perspective on their own good fortune in terms of adequate housing, food on the table, and a livelihood. "I think we are more satisfied with what we have, and we can be more sensitive to issues of justice and injustice." When asked how the local community at large has responded to the program, Theorin replied, "Most reactions are very interested and positive. Some people have expressed interest in hosting children next year."

Kinsman reported, "The Mississippi children are from very impoverished areas. I think we help to bring hope into many homes where virtually no hope existed before."

Building For The Future With A Community Land Trust

The land has always been the heart and soul of the Hay River Valley and of rural Wisconsin. A respect for the heritage, a pride in work, a spirit of neighborliness and community, have all been strong because the connection to the land has been strong. Keeping that connection has not always been easy, and making sure that control of the land remains in the hands of the local community has often been a struggle. In many ways, the history of rural America since the Homestead Act of 1862 has been the story of a struggle by family farmers and rural communities to keep control of the land. In recent years, this has been especially tough, and in the future it promises to be even more difficult.

The Wisconsin Farmland Conservancy is being organized to provide an effective tool that can help keep a strong connection to the land and assure that in the future control of the land remains in rural communities. But in the end, even more is at stake. At the heart of the Conservancy vision is the belief that the land and its sustainable fertility is the foundation on which to build a new future for farms and rural communities. The Conservancy is a tool that will allow people to assure proper stewardship of the soil, to maintain the base of family farms, to encourage farmer-to-farmer and urban-to-rural cooperation, to limit land speculation, and to foster a diverse and creative expansion of local economic development.

The Land Trust As An Alternative To Private Ownership

According to Tom Saunders, president of the Conservancy, private ownership of land by individual farm families is a fairly recent institution, most highly developed in the United States and Canada. Until recently, that has seemed an adequate system of land tenure, but land ownership has become less accessible to family farmers because the value of the land has increased relative to the average yearly income. Saunders, a dairy farmer from Prairie Farm, believes this trend to be inevitable as the land base declines.

"The capital cost of land ownership has become an increasing burden to family farmers. Every time the land changes hands, even from father to daughter, the new owner must come up with the total capital cost of the land. As the value per unit of production decreases, the number of acres needed to sustain the family must go up. In modern times, almost no one has the cash to buy a farm, so almost everyone must borrow money and pay interest in order to secure a place on the land," Saunders explained. Community people also suffer the consequences of these increasing interest payments due to the fact that this money usually does not cycle through the local economy. If interest payments could be greatly reduced, it could stimulate jobs, small businesses, and the overall economic health.

"One way to relieve family farmers of the capital cost of land is to place the land in trust. Once the original price of the land is paid off, the lease payment, which gives the farm family a 99 year or lifetime lease on their land, need only be enough to pay local property taxes, insurance, retirement, and a modest amount to cover the operating cost of the trust," Saunders stated. The Wisconsin Farmland Conservancy, with its headquarters in Glenwood City, is a nonprofit corporation that is designed to do two main jobs: 1.) attract alternative investment funds from a variety of sources and use these funds to finance the purchase of land for use by family farmers, and 2.) provide a community controlled legal structure that will hold this land in permanent trust, assure that it is farmed according to sound conservation practices, and provide long-term security for the farm families.

Putting Families On The Land

The Wisconsin Land Conservancy plans to establish a network of local Community Land Trusts (CLTs). Initially the Conservancy seeks to do two model projects — one in Monroe County in the Cashton—Norwalk—St. Mary's area, the other in either the Glenwood City or Prairie Farm area. Each cluster would involve three to five farms. Bill Wenzel, the Conservancy's director and sole employee, told how the local CLT will identify farms to purchase and identify families interested in farming. A CLT will negotiate the terms of purchase and will work with the new farm family to establish the terms of a lifetime lease on the farm land, including the long-term conservation easements. The Conservancy will purchase the farm using its Capital fund, and then transfer title to the CLT.

The Conservancy will retain the legal right to enforce the conservation easements. The trust will own the land, but the farmer will own the homestead buildings, all the cattle and machinery, and will make all basic management decisions, provided they are within the basic conservation plan. The CLT will work with the new farmer to obtain financing for the buildings and farming operation, and assist in developing a workable farm management plan. The CLT will also help to develop a variety of support projects including equipment sharing, joint purchasing, and direct marketing options that enhance financial viability. Family farmers will have the right to sell their buildings and transfer their lease on the land, with the trust retaining an option to purchase. Also, there will be some restrictions on resale to prevent speculation and assure that the next farmer is able to afford the property.

Conservancy Develops Stewardship Principles

Stewardship principles play an important part of the Wisconsin Land Conservancy, according to Paul Helgeson, of Boyceville, who is the treasurer. He shared the working draft of stewardship principles for the Conservancy:

The Wisconsin Farmland Conservancy believes that:

- Each generation is called to be stewards of the land for future generations, and should leave the land and water in better condition than when they received stewardship of it.
- Keeping farmers on the land and providing access to land to young and restarting farmers are vital to the future of our rural communities and our society as a whole.
- The judgment and farming skill of the leaseholders of trust land are the key ingredients in carrying out the stewardship principles of the Conservancy.
- Farming practices that depend on intensive chemical use, deplete soil and water resources, and create larger and larger farms are not good stewardship nor do they lead to vital rural communities.

Following those principles the Conservancy seeks to implement these goals:

- 1.) Reduce soil loss to a rate that is renewed each year or less.
- 2.) Improve the condition of the soil over time and to build up the tilth.
- 3.) Farm in a way that is healthy for the producer and the consumer.
- 4.) Keep farm size and operation size to a scale that sustains a farm family with adequate income and enables the practice of excellent stewardship.
- 5.) Reduce reliance on intensive chemical farming practices.

More specifically the Conservancy plans for the farmers to carry out these practices:

Soil conservation: Use practices such as contour strips, grass waterways, minimum tillage (but not no-till) and terraces in order to reduce soil loss to a rate that is renewed each year (i.e. to T, which varies from 1 to 5 tons per acres per year, depending on the field).

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Soil building: Use animal manure, green manure, compost, natural or mineral fertilizers, and crop rotations to maintain and build healthy soil. Minimize use of chemical or synthetic fertilizers, herbicides, and insecticides.

Weed and pest control: Use mechanical cultivation, crop rotations, natural predators, and maintenance of healthy soil to control weeds and pests. Focus on the reduction of weeds and pests, not their complete eradication. Minimize use of chemical and synthetic herbicides and insecticides and, if possible, eliminate their use.

Scale and size: Determine appropriate size of farm and scale of operation by assessing cash flow, stewardship, and access to land considerations. Strive towards self-sufficiency regarding inputs.

Decentralized Agricultural Processing Plants

In addition the fundamental issue of enhancing the income needed for families to remain on the land and for local economies to be made healthy needs to be addressed. According to Saunders, decreasing the cost of the land will help, but without an increase in the price for food products, it will be difficult. "Part of the erosion of economic base for many rural communities has been the loss of small-scale processing plants for locally produced commodities. In the days of the local dairy plant, packing house, feed and flour mill, the agriculturally generated dollar circulated through the local economy several more times than it does now. Clearly, reestablishing decentralized small-scale processing plants would go a long way toward stabilizing rural communities. If it would be possible to pay farmers higher prices, the benefit to local communities would be even greater," Saunders asserted.

One possibility lies in the growing market for organic food locally raised and marketed in order to pay the producers a higher price. Saunders sees marketing as still being the big question mark in the organic food business, and only products of the highest quality can command the higher prices whether or not they are organic. Indications are that more consumers are becoming concerned about the quality of their food and are willing to pay higher prices for these products.

Organizers of the Wisconsin Farmland Conservancy believe that the land trust concept and structure hold forth the opportunity to establish small-scale processing plants and other business ventures. "Just as easements and lease covenants can ensure appropriate use of the land, they may ensure democracy in the work place and fair prices to producers in CLT sponsored projects. Easements and covenants between CLT manager/owners and producers and plant workers will be mutually agreed upon by all parties, ensuring the rights of workers to collective bargaining. They will, at the same time, establish the community, in the form of the CLT board, as the ultimate arbitrator of contract disputes," Saunders stated.

Conclusion

Saunders summed up his alternative vision for rural America by stating, "Land based economic development is a way of using the received legal structure to work for the benefit of the people, the land, and the community. It presents farm families and rural communities with a genuine opportunity to reestablish a relationship with the land, based upon respect and cooperation, that will lead to ecologically sound and economically democratic communities. If we can do this in a small way within the dominant, extractive energy intensive industrial system, such communities will become a beacon to light the way to a *re-evolution* of our most fundamental relationships."

Part IV

People Of Faith Join The Fight To Preserve The Family Farm

"Our church has been fairly clear about our values and beliefs in relation to the land, the water, and toward democratic and decentralized ownership of land. But our willingness to wade into the political battle necessary to put our beliefs into action has been less clear," Anne Kanten said.

"In Europe farm policy and social policy are hand in hand. We don't begin to think that way," she said. "All we seem to want is cheap raw materials. When," she said, "will the population wake up and realize that what affects the rural segment of society affects everyone?"

"We need to bridge the gap between what we are as rural and what we are as urban people," Kanten said. "People need to know where food comes from. That sounds kind of silly, but there are so many people who don't understand that what we do out here is produce food."

Forever a farmer: Passion for farm justice moves Anne Kanten from protestor to policy maker and beyond. By Bob Ehlert. *The Lutheran*. February 8, 1989. page 16.

What Does The Judaic-Christian Tradition Have To Say To Us?

"Is the idea of a Christian ecology some Johnny-come-lately contrivance to make our religious tradition relevant in the modern world? Or is proper and responsible ecological behavior inextricably imbedded in the Judaic-Christian tradition awaiting discovery, new meaning, and elucidation?" Wes Jackson asked. Jackson, director of the Land Institute in Salina, Kansas, posed these questions as a framework for his address at the 1988 North American Conference on Christianity and Ecology in Madrid, Iowa.

If the idea of a Christian ecology is a contrivance, then Jackson maintained that people of the Judaic-Christian tradition should acknowledge it as such. People of faith, then, must also look for proof texts in scriptures in order to support a favorite viewpoint. But, if the study of scriptures reveals a proper and responsible relationship of humans to creation, then people of faith are set free to put their faith into action in the world. He argued that the Judaic-Christian tradition addresses the identity question in a way that makes a difference.

Who Are We Of The Judaic-Christian Tradition And How Do We Operate?

As a way of looking at scriptures for the purpose of discovering a proper and responsible relationship of humans to creation, Wes Jackson asked a central question, "Who are we of the Judaic-Christian tradition and how do we operate?" He responded in four ways.

We are a people who believe and who act as though God works through history. Jackson called attention to the prophetic tradition, "God has told you what is good; and what is it that the Lord asks of you? Only to act justly, to love loyalty, and to walk wisely before your God" (Micah 6:8 NEB). This prophetic tradition leads to Jesus who announces peace and love. Operating out of a dynamic view of scripture, Jackson contended that people of faith are challenged to believe that the power of God is not limited to biblical times; the God of the Bible is also the God who works through history.

We are a people who are greatly affected by the Exodus event. The God who works through history can be seen working in the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. In Egypt, the pharaohs are holding the people in bondage; as slaves, the people do not have to think. The release of the people from captivity and the wandering in the wilderness allows those with a slave mentality to die so that a new people can arise to live in responsible citizenship in a new land. With this citizenship, the people can sit under their own fig trees, prune their own vineyards, and be their own priests (Micah 4:4-5). They are free to imagine the future.

Wes Jackson made the connection to the God who works in history in our day by pointing to the oppressed peoples who look to the Exodus event as hope for release from bondage. The choice at Sinai faces people longing for freedom today — to go back to the security of living in slavery or to go ahead to the uncertainty of living in citizenship. Those who choose to enter into freedom must be prepared to accept the responsibilities. They are empowered to live as humans in the creation.

We are a people who believe that "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18). Oftentimes this biblical saying is taken to mean that a nation requires great visionaries for its survival. Jackson put a new twist on the quotation by stating that a

nation needs many little vision makers. He told of a farmer in Ohio who was always talking about different possibilities for his place. By being connected to that land and by seeing his health and sustenance in that land, as well as a place to raise his family and to appreciate creation, the farmer possessed imagination.

“Those who live on a piece of land and love that place have an imagination about what they are going to do with that place. They begin to affect arrangements. By resonating with the place, those visions provide them with an ensemble of factors that provide resilience that you don’t have when you don’t own a piece of land, or when you work as a tenant farmer, or when you just treat your farm like a food factory rather than a hearth. Then your vision diminishes, and you perish,” Jackson explained. The little vision makers provide the food, clothing, and shelter that keeps the people from perishing, he said.

We are also a people who take the Sermon on the Mount seriously. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jackson said, people of faith are given a recipe for an entry point to experience the Kingdom of God here on earth. This relationship speaks of a connectedness to the creation in which people of faith are concerned for the last and the least. Jackson expanded upon the beatitude — “Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God” (Luke 6:20b) — by telling of St. Francis of Assisi. St. Francis married poverty and, by doing so, came to experience the socio-political-religious power for social transformation.

While he confessed that he does not have what it takes to embrace voluntary poverty, Jackson also challenged others to admit that voluntary simplicity does not have the willpower to make the political agendas needed to get rid of an extractive economy. For Jackson, only those who experience the gut-wrenching effects of poverty are truly able to develop such political agendas; identification with poverty will take years before a political agenda develops. His critique is beneficial, on the one hand, in that it insists on a certain modesty by people of goodwill who would empathize with the poor. But his position is problematic in that the Sermon on the Mount becomes an impossible ideal to which people should strive. More empowering would be the discovery of the Sermon on the Mount as a call by the Creator God through the Savior Jesus Christ for people of faith to live out who they are. Because the God of the Exodus has set the people free, therefore people of faith are to be about the business of individual and social transformation.

What Difference Does The Judaic-Christian Tradition Make?

Wes Jackson recounted how he was asked to speak at a Roman Catholic parish in Amarillo, Texas by a priest who was protesting against the Pantex plant that made nuclear submarines there. Not too far away, Jackson noticed an Iowa Beef Packing plant that processed a million head of cattle a year. Each worker killed 3.33 animals a day in a system of industrialized efficiency. The cattle had been raised with irrigated corn in huge feedlots. Meanwhile, many farmers in this country are forced to immigrate to the cities.

“As I came up driving through Iowa, I saw wonderful farms and silos. Where are the cattle? You have to have animals as part of the ecosystem. You don’t put manure out over the Oqualala aquifer. There is no virtue in Iowa Beef other than 39 cent hamburger. That isn’t the kind of meat you pray over. The system that makes Iowa Beef possible and even compelling makes Pantex inevitable. As long as there is such a desacralization of nature, humanity will require Pantex to protect that centralized system, which is immoral and rotten to the core. This centralized system that rewards power is the antithesis of the prophetic tradition of our heritage. Pantex and Iowa Beef are one; you can’t pull those two apart. We have to oppose Iowa Beef in the same spirit and in the same power we oppose Pantex. Pantex and Iowa Beef have got to go. That is all there is to it,” Jackson contended.

Church Leaders Urge Social Involvement

As the rural crisis has intensified during the decade of the 1980s, the voices of church leaders in support of the family farm have increased in volume and frequency. No longer are they like lonely prophets crying in the wilderness. The chorus rises from various denominations across the country. In this chapter, I would like you to hear from some of these church leaders who urge social involvement.

Hope Has Two Sisters — Anger And Courage

In his younger days, William Cotton campaigned for civil rights, opposed the Vietnam War, and advocated for women's issues. Now, as superintendent of the Creston District of the Iowa Conference in the United Methodist Church, Pastor Cotton plays a key role in organizing congregations, pastors, and laity who are caught up in the economic and cultural storms of the time. Through his work as district superintendent, Cotton relates the Church to rural life and helps its members to look with realistic Christian hope.

In speaking at the 1988 North American Conference On Christianity And Ecology at Madrid, Iowa, Cotton expressed a longing for a new *ethic of hope*. According to Cotton, St. Augustine, a church father in the fifth century, said, "Hope has two sisters — anger and courage." Both are needed to address the question of how people are meant to live in relationship. Cotton asserted that it is right to become angry when one cares deeply for something; to demonstrate indignation towards a political process that does not address the real issues; to show gentle outrage in response to a way of life that serves death instead of life. "Maybe the problem is that we don't care. I haven't seen an outraged United Methodist in so long. Nothing outrages us anymore. Perhaps that is why we don't hope anymore. When we do become angry, that is the first sign of hope," Cotton said.

Together with *anger*, Cotton believes *courage* to act responsibly is necessary to live in hope. He urged participants to act out of the prophetic by confronting those who would act like kings with disregard for the people over whom they exercise power. In order to carry out this work with integrity, Cotton maintained that people of courage must return to a simplicity of life. "We must ask the question — 'How much is enough?' But, before we ask it of others, we must ask it of ourselves. If we cannot live simply ourselves, how can we challenge others to do so? Let us live simply in order that others may simply live."

This new ethic of hope gives an avenue for living in appropriate relationships. In order to address this matter, Cotton dealt with the biblical injunction *to have dominion over the earth* (Genesis 1:26). While this particular phrase has been problematic and even embarrassing for some, Cotton asserted that, properly understood, the command speaks of a care for the land and its inhabitants. God has given a garden, and boundaries have been placed around the garden. A work permit has been granted, and freedom to co-create.

To live within the boundaries is to enjoy freedom; to live outside of the boundaries is to kill the earth. "Our problem now is that all the boundary lines are down. The sin of pride is to be set above nature," Cotton explained. To expand upon this analysis, Cotton quoted Abraham Heschel, "Most people regard exploitation as a misdemeanor. To God it is a catastrophe." For Cotton the secret lies in living, not *above* or *apart* from the land and each other, but *with* the land and each other. In this way people care for the land and each other.

On The Importance Of Having Passion

Bud Christenson shows passion in his voice and actions. In speaking at the **1987 National Conference On Rural Ministry** in Dubuque, Iowa, Christenson gave voice to that passion around the theme of *Sacred Land, Sacred Trust*. He recalled being angry about the transaction his father negotiated on their land in which the county bought the rights to a gravel pit for only \$1,000. Such indignation over injustice stayed with him when he became assistant to the bishop in the Central District of the American Lutheran Church.

According to Christenson, black farmers show a passion for justice. He recounted how, during a dry year in the South, farmers from Nebraska shipped hay to Alabama. With tongue in cheek, Christenson told how passionless Nebraska farmers did a *brave* thing in putting notes and pictures into the bales of hay. This act led to an invitation by the black farmers to their white counterparts to come down for a visit. So, a busload from Byron, Nebraska left for an eye-opening experience in Alabama.

"Black farmers can teach us how to suffer, to find joy in pain, and to struggle as a way of life. The blacks said that 'church folks means troublemakers.' Black people believe that they can change things," Christenson explained. "I do not believe Lutheran people believe they can change things. We have become inactive and dependent. A struggle for survival is ahead of us. We cannot believe that everything will work out."

Carrying Out The Prophetic Role Of The Church

When Norman White was a student at St. Bernards Seminary in Dubuque 35 years ago, he was tagged with the nickname — *Stormin' Norman*. I discovered at the **1988 National Conference On Rural Ministry** in Dubuque, Iowa how Father Norman White lived up to his billing. Former Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz had finished his panel discussion with Iowa Representative Berkely Bedell. During the discussion and his previous presentation, Butz spoke of how a number of farmers are "excess resources" and that "more will have to go." Afterwards, I watched as White went up to Earl Butz to engage him in conversation. When the talking became quite heated, White finally told Butz before he left, "I have spent my whole ministry trying to counter your destructive agricultural policies." Butz yelled after him, "Be careful young man or you will lose your parish."

When I went to hear Father Norman White at the **Rural Life Day Program** at St. Mary's Ridge, Wisconsin later in the year, he told of that very incident. Then he explained that the bishop had asked him to leave the parish and to take a position as Rural Life Director. In that position White urges people of faith to fight against the public policy that makes for cheap raw materials. He also believes people must anticipate the debt problems and begin talking seriously about a policy of debt restructuring. White also gives guidance to clergy and church members on how to carry out the prophetic role of the church. Clergy cannot carry out this work alone, he believes, or Butz is right in that the people of the parish will force the pastor to leave. White counsels clergy and lay people to work in an interfaith, community-wide context for a stronger base of support.

In addition to the prophetic dimension of his ministry, White also carries out a pastoral approach. He conducts daylong, interfaith retreats in which anybody concerned about the rural crisis can come together for guided reflection on what people can do. Also, White works with the Iowa Mental Health Center to offer peer crisis training in order to equip those who do first contact work with persons experiencing turmoil in their lives. "My hope is that each county has a support group where people can come together in order to pray with each other and to support each other," Father Norman White added.

Living On The Cutting Edge

What can church people do to put their faith into action in the midst of the rural crisis? David Ostendorf addressed this question in an October 28, 1987 presentation at the Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary at the invitation of the Seminary and the Town and County Church Commission of the Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church. Ostendorf is an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ and is full-time Director of Prairiefire Rural Action, a rural organizing, education, and advocacy organization based in Des Moines, Iowa. In his remarks, *On The Cutting Edge: The Creative Church And The Transformation Of Rural America*, he shared ten proposals for action.

- **Rediscovering The Covenantal Community:** In the midst of an individualistic economic Darwinism that continues to erode rural community values and in which neighbor is pitted against neighbor, Ostendorf suggested that people of faith need to rediscover, describe, and interpret the nature of the covenantal community on the God-given land. The emerging structure of land control in the hands of the few and the accompanying destruction of community is an affront to the fundamental tenets of distributive justice inherent in the faith, Ostendorf maintained.
- **Reverse Triage In Calling Rural Pastors:** Ostendorf called attention to the prevalent notion that seminary graduates serve an apprenticeship in a rural church before they move on to the real ministry in a metropolitan area. This practice must be changed in order to meet the pressing needs of the rural areas. To do this, he suggested that seminaries and judicatories call the best and brightest to the worst and most blighted of communities. In order to do so, salary scales must be equalized and career ladders put aside.
- **Supporting And Strengthening Rural Pastors:** At the same time as qualified pastors are called to rural churches, they must be reinforced in their commitment, Ostendorf asserted. New technology — such as telecommunications and computer mail networks — can overcome the obstacles of being physically isolated and remote from judicatory offices. Ongoing programs of continuing education as well as printed and audio-visual materials can keep rural pastors informed and up-to-date, according to Ostendorf.
- **Resettling The Land:** Even though Ostendorf admits the idea sounds crazy, he believes that people of faith should take seriously the notion of bringing people back onto the land. He pointed to the massive pool of investment capital available through the nation's religious communities as funds that could be redirected to the outright purchase of farmland. This land could be sold to restarting, beginning, and minority farm operators. Terms could be developed for 20-30 year lease-purchase agreements with low interest rates to cover the cost of money and return some actual income to the church investor. Local congregations could also participate in the resettlement plan. Many farms are controlled by congregations and judicatories. Instead of renting these out, Ostendorf suggested selling these farms to new or restarting families.
- **Land Control And Land Reform:** As part of the alternative vision, Ostendorf called on people of faith to begin to develop solid positions of leadership and support for land reform policies in the U.S. and in nations throughout the world. The church is one institution, he contended, that can and must take the lead role in developing, shaping, and advancing a global land covenant initiative whose fundamental purposes would include the development of policies to assure widespread distribution and control of land and development of understandings regarding the relationship between landlessness, displacement, and influx of people into the already-crowded cities. Such initiatives would have to come out of local churches where the hurting people of the land gather as a community.

- **Ministry Centers In Rural America:** In a novel idea, Ostendorf proposed that church bodies set up ministry centers in areas where rural congregations are shrinking in size and income. Such County (or multi-county) Ministry Centers could enable denominations to pool the talents and skills of pastors trained for rural ministry to more effectively serve the larger community of faith in a designated area. Such a staff pool would provide pastoral ministry, leadership development and training, community outreach, human needs, public policy and advocacy, and perhaps even legal and technical assistance for families facing land loss. Such a multi-staff team ministry would also give mutual support to clergy.

- **The Activist Rural Church:** With the times demanding renewed commitment to public involvement, Ostendorf contended that rural congregations, pastors, and leaders should work with grassroots groups and coalitions whose purpose is to develop and build organizations and leaders committed to securing just economic and social policies. According to Ostendorf, many of these groups are church-related or supported (if not church-based) and are able to provide strong support to development of an effective church response to the socio-economic and political conditions that characterize life in the countryside. Ostendorf pointed to his own experience in Iowa. When he first began his work with Prairiefire in 1982, many of the organizing meetings were held in churches, and much of the leadership and support came from church people and pastors who recognized and experienced first-hand the harsh impacts of the economic crisis. Churches opened their doors for meetings; church people provided support and leadership to the growing grassroots movement; education and training sessions on borrower's rights, state and national policy issues, confronting unjust lending institutions, and building coalitions could not be organized quickly enough; new leaders emerged to guide the organizing efforts; and a relatively new phenomenon in this era emerged — highly visible, non-violent public protest to slow or stop forced farm sales and to change public policy.

- **Rural-Urban Partnerships:** Rural churches must look beyond the community of faith in the countryside, Ostendorf told his hearers. To do this rural congregations need to develop and strengthen ties with urban partners. He pointed out how urban-rural conferences sponsored by the National Council of Churches in cooperation with many other church and religious groups have nurtured a strong base of understanding among rural and urban people. Out of those conferences and out of similar events across the country, exposure visits by urban people to the countryside (and vice versa) have been organized; sister church relationships have been developed between urban and rural congregations; and working relationships on public policy issues are developing.

- **Recovering The Power Of Symbols Of Faith:** To sustain people during the time ahead, Ostendorf spoke of the need to recover the power of the symbols of faith. Wooden crosses that have become symbolic of the farm movement — planted in court house lawns and held high at public events and protests — have strengthened and empowered rural people, and provided new understandings of the suffering and hope inherent in a basic symbol of the faith. The power of bread as one of the most fundamental products of the land and of those who work it takes on new, life-giving meaning in the context of the sacrament shared among the beleaguered community of faith. Without the renewing power of these and other symbols of faith, Ostendorf asserted that people will be unable to act with strength and resolution to build a just future.

- **Revitalized Preaching And The Fervor Of The Gospel Message:** Finally, Ostendorf implored those entrusted with the task of preaching to make real the fervor and power of the gospel message born of life with those who suffer. Too much preaching, Ostendorf contended, is weak, powerless, and uninspiring, and often totally disconnected from the lives of the people. To guide, sustain, and empower the people, preaching must be powered with the experience, pain, and faith of the people, Ostendorf urged.

An Ethic Rooted In The Exodus Event

A people who groan in bondage cry out to the Lord God. God hears their cry and sends Moses in order to lead them out of Egypt, through the wilderness, and into the promised land. As family units and as an entire people, they are called to serve the Lord in response to the mighty act of deliverance. This Exodus event can be a paradigm for us today.

And The People Groaned In Bondage

Bondage in Egypt means slave work for the Israelites at the brick factory. Such labor focuses on efficiency and profit. The bricks must be made according to specifications and on schedule. When the workers are compliant, they are given straw to make the bricks; when they are difficult, they are made to gather their own straw. Those who make the bricks do not benefit economically; only those who own the means of production. The workers have no control over their own lives; a lack of freedom breeds unhappiness and hostility as the people in bondage owe their lives to the Pharaoh.

Life at the brick factory brings *repression* in that the taskmasters set increasingly heavier burdens upon the people (Exodus 1:10-11), *humiliation* with the bitterness that sets in because of the rigorous work (1:13-14), and *enforced birth control* where the midwives are told to kill the male children (1:15-22). In this life of hopelessness — where they live in a land not their own — the people cry to God in the hope that God will provide deliverance. Freedom begins in the recognition of enslavement and the faithful prayer for release.

I Have Heard The Cry Of My People

The cry of the people rises to the attentive ears of the Lord God. "And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God saw the people of Israel, and God knew their condition" (Exodus 2:24-25). This God chooses to become involved in human history. God remembers God's promises to the people and acts to remain true to that word. The Lord God — who created heavens and the earth, saved Noah and his family, and made a chosen people to be a blessing to all the peoples of the earth — listens to the slaves in Egypt. Down through history, the cries of those who live in poverty and hunger are heard by the Lord God.

Go And Say To My People

God chooses Moses to deliver the people from bondage in Egypt. "Go and gather the elders of Israel together, and say to them, 'I have observed you and what has been done in Egypt; and I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt'" (Exodus 3:16b-17a). But Moses proves to be a reluctant leader. "Moses said to God, 'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt'" (3:11). God responds with the assurance that God will accompany Moses so that at a later time the people of God shall serve God. Moses argues with God over the call (4:1, 4:10, 4:14). Like many oppressed people, Moses believes he does not possess the ability to speak and that those in power will not listen to him. God patiently answers his objections until, finally, God shows a righteous indignation that speeds Moses on his way to speak to the people.

When Moses goes to the people, he does not find a receptive audience. Even though the people are groaning under the heavy load and crying out for deliverance, they object to the leader God has sent to them. When Pharaoh compels the people to gather their own straw in order to make bricks, the people blame Moses for the ill treatment (5:20-21). In so doing, the oppressed internalize the mentality and guidelines of the oppressors and show a fearfulness of the risks needed to attain freedom. They become abusive towards the very one who is meant to lead them into the promised land. In order to become free people, God must teach them to assume direction for their lives.

Wandering In The Wilderness

Imagine 600,000 men, on foot, plus women and children uprooting themselves and moving into the unknown. Summoned by God's call of hope, the people follow Moses out of Egypt into the wilderness. For forty years they wander in the desert; during this time the Israelites learn to be free and to be a people. Only in taking on responsibility for each other could they experience true freedom; only in relating to each other within community could they gain identity as a people. Neither happened in captivity, for while oppression sometimes brings out the best in people, oftentimes bondage brings out the worst as individuals seek to carve out their own niches of security. Even while they wandered in the wilderness, the people complained against Moses and longed for the leeks and onions of Egypt. God gave the gift of the law in order for the people to live in freedom and community.

A Promised Land Full Of Milk And Honey

As people who have been delivered from bondage in Egypt, they look to the promise by God for a land "flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:17b). Not only is this figurative language but it is also scientific terminology. By a *milk flow* and *honey flow* is meant the peak season of spring and summer when pastures are at their most productive stages. The cattle that feed on the forage and the bees that visit the blossoms are said to be producing a corresponding flow of milk and honey. A land flowing with milk and honey would be a land of rich, green, and lush pastures. The move from Egypt to the promised land, then, meant a change from poverty and hunger to sufficiency and interdependence.

As For Me And My Family, We Will Serve The Lord

When the time comes for the wilderness wanderings to end and the entrance into the promised land to begin, Joshua summons the people together at Shechem. This judge, who has been given the mantle of leadership after the death of Moses, speaks in a cultural context to the people as families and heads of families. He demonstrates how the covenant God has made with his people deals directly between God and the most basic social unit. Joshua declares that he and his family will continue to live in that covenant relationship (Joshua 24:15). He challenges the people to do the same. The people promise to be faithful to the God who brought them out of Egypt and into the promised land.

For 200 to 300 years the covenant bound the people together in their social and political realities. No leader or king told them how to live, for they did what was right in their own eyes. A fundamental equality of status and responsibility governed their lives. They were told to remember how they were poor in Egypt and that they were never to place each other in poverty. But the people eventually forgot their slavery in a foreign land and demanded a king like the surrounding countries. Even though God warned them that a king would be just as demanding as the pharaohs, the people insisted and in effect terminated their part of the covenant. The Lord God would need to send another deliverer in the person of Jesus Christ in order to bind the people of God to the Lord God in a covenant relationship.

Who Will Capture The Soul Of The Heartland?

The Upper Midwest is often called the heartland of America — a central region of the country vital to the nation because of its food producing ability. Within this heartland, a battle is being waged over land use and environmental protection. On the one side, proponents of measures to protect the environment express concern over the contamination of soil and water and take legislative action to correct this problem. On the other side, opponents argue that a certain level of contamination is unavoidable considering modern farming practices and take lobbying action to minimize legislation. In the balance hangs the question — “Who will capture the soul of the heartland?” This issue was addressed at the 1988 North American Conference On Christianity And Ecology at Madrid, Iowa.

Iowa Groundwater Bill Opposed By Fertilizer And Chemical Association

In 1985, the first major study of Iowa municipal water supplies fed by groundwater found that half the systems were contaminated with synthetic chemicals. Subsequent studies, including one of all municipal water systems, have shown the same thing. When added to the worsening problem of nitrate contamination of wells, this captured public attention. Because Iowa is second only to California in the use of pesticides and second to Illinois in the use of nitrogen fertilizer, it is not surprising that much of Iowa's underground contamination is related to farm practices. However, landfilling of solid waste and the storage of chemicals in underground tanks also leak industrial chemicals in the groundwater.

Rep. David Osterberg authored an Iowa groundwater protection bill. At the conference, he explained that such legislation is unique because of its nonregulatory approach.

- Grants will be given to county landfills to install leachate control systems, to do more monitoring of nearby groundwater, and to incorporate alternatives to landfilling waste such as garbage separation, waste heat recovery, and recycling.
- Research on how pesticides get from farm fields into water supplies is to be combined with demonstration plots all over the state, which should show farmers that less application and more careful application of farm chemicals can bring an economic benefit while protecting groundwater.
- Toxic cleanup days will be held when Iowa citizens can bring household cleaners, paints, pesticides, and waste oil to a central location for proper disposal at state expense. This will keep some hazardous waste out of landfills.
- Research centers were established at each of the three state universities to study: 1.) sustainable agriculture, 2.) the health effects of contaminated drinking water, and 3.) proper handling and disposal of chemicals by business.

While most of the new groundwater law depends on Iowans voluntarily changing the way they handle chemicals, there is a regulatory component to the bill, including increased testing and training for those who apply pesticides. Also, more staff is added to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to enforce existing laws and regulations.

The second unique feature of the bill is its source of funding. Of the \$9-10 million per year to be spent on groundwater protection, 75% comes from user fees on those products most likely to cause contamination of groundwater. For example:

- The state pesticide registration fee was increased from \$20 to a sales based tax of from \$250 to \$3,000 for each of the 6,000 pesticides registered for sale in the state. Farmers will pay a fee of 75 cents per ton of nitrogen fertilizer they use.
- Retailers who sell certain hazardous household products must pay a fee of \$25 for that privilege. This fee provides \$ one half million for the toxic cleanup days program.
- The previous state landfill tax of 25 cents per ton was boosted to \$1.50 per ton and will increase by 50 cents per year. This makes alternatives to landfilling more economically attractive. It increases the cost of landfilling while it gives landfill operations money to implement alternatives to burying garbage.

Osterberg predicted that groundwater protection would be on the legislative agenda in most states in the next few years. He recommended the Iowa approach: programs that tax problem chemicals in order to pay for and encourage alternative ways of storing and disposing of chemicals.

Not surprisingly this approach met strong disapproval from those who sell chemicals and fertilizers. Osterberg made available the following letter dated July 28, 1988 that was sent to agribusiness dealers by John Hester — President of Hester's Grain and Fertilizer and President of the Iowa Fertilizer and Chemical Association.

What in the Hell is wrong with us? We sell fertilizer, farm chemicals and equipment, so naturally when some environmentalists attack us we yell and scream. We call our legislator and march in great numbers to the legislature when they are passing groundwater bills, but, when legislators vote our way or we find someone who will run against those legislators who are trying to run us out of business with groundwater legislation, we don't support them.

We are missing the opportunity of a lifetime if we can't figure out a way to give financial help to these friends who are running for state offices this fall. There are many ag groups in Iowa. Of all of these groups, ours has the most legislation passed against them, and you fertilizer and chemical people give the least amount to your P.A.C.

It is absolutely critical that you and your employees sit down right now and write out a personal check, (it can't be a corporate check), to the Iowa Fertilizer & Chemical Association P.A.C. fund. Our Des Moines office will be sure it gets in the right hands.

I am not kidding you, when I say that legislators are beginning to think that our industry is full of a bunch of cry babies who complain about what's going on, but we never put our money where our mouth is or help them with their campaign. Please send \$50-\$100-\$500 or even more so that we can help you to get the right people elected.

If we fail to get support next year, we are in a for world of hurt. There is already a push to double or triple what we are paying in taxes now plus some additional regulations. If the right legislation passes, you will save a lot more each year than the contribution we're asking.

Osterberg appealed to church people at the conference to engage in voluntary solutions in changing behavior patterns so that less regulatory means can be used to protect the environment. In addition, he argued that Christians can band together to form a political force in order to save the creation. In his opinion, ozone-destroying chemicals can be banned, endangered species protected, and water made clean again by legislative action as well as moral pronouncements.

Minnesota Clean Water Action Meets Opposition From Corn Growers Association

In Minnesota, 70% of the population receives its drinking water from groundwater, and 99% of rural Minnesota uses groundwater for drinking. A University of Minnesota study found that 38% of 500 public and private drinking water wells tested showed pesticide contamination. This included 11 herbicides, and 3 insecticides, mainly Atrazine and Lasso. Frank Hornstein, co-director of the Clean Water Action in St. Paul, MN, spoke at the conference about his group's work to implement the same kind of groundwater protection legislation in Minnesota as that passed in Iowa. He explained how environmental organizations, including Clean Water Action, were supporting legislation to enact a nondegradation standard, which means that no further contamination of groundwater would be acceptable.

Hornstein told that there were formidable obstacles to enacting the legislation, particularly a massive lobbying effort by chemical corporations and their allies to defeat this groundwater legislation. As an example, he produced a flyer distributed by the Minnesota Corn Growers Association, which showed how opponents are proposing groundwater standards as a measure to counter a nondegradation bill.

Health-based standards must be adopted. The agricultural community would be crippled by a policy that does not tolerate a trace of foreign substance in ground water. Standards must be set that allow for safe, health-based levels of agricultural chemicals. Trace levels from routine ag practices must be allowed as long as they do not cause unreasonable harm to health. Health-based standards will provide a trigger number for actions such as cleanup, increased monitoring and/or education of those who use possible contaminants. Groundwater programs should be funded by all Minnesotans. Everybody benefits from usable water — whether for cooking, drinking, or irrigating crops and lawns. The agricultural community must not be forced to bear the entire cost of clean water through more taxes or higher fees on the fertilizer and ag chemicals.

According to Hornstein, standards actually are a license to pollute and, as they change, allow the level of pollution to go up or down. Hornstein believes they are cynically exploiting citizen concerns in suggesting standards. As another strategy, they seek to tie up the legislative and regulative process with an endless series of lawsuits over standards.

The approach of the Corn Growers Association, according to Hornstein, is one of *divide and conquer* in which farmers and environmentalists are pitted against each other. He viewed the real problem as a business orientation that has pushed farmers into planting fence-row to fence-row and becoming dependent upon chemicals and pesticides, which results in concentration of land ownership. Hornstein contended that small farmers and environmentalists are potential allies. In order to protect their holdings, small farmers can wean themselves from chemicals and pesticides. He chided his fellow environmentalists, "Unfortunately most urban environmentalists have no idea about farming. Farmers need supply management so that they can control production and receive fair prices for their products. Environmentalists need the support of farmers in order to pass legislation."

If you want environmental peace, work for social justice was the theme Hornstein used to conclude his presentation. From his Jewish background, he told, how in the Hebrew perspective, justice for the land means justice for the family farm. Hornstein, whose wife is a rabbi in the Reformed Jewish tradition, asserted that Christians and Jews hold a social justice perspective in common for addressing the environmental problem.

Farmers Demonstrate A Sustainable Agriculture

A growing number of farmers are moving away from a factory farm prescription and towards a family farm perspective. Instead of relying exclusively upon the experts for advice, these people are developing their own expertise. Some of them are sharing their discoveries with others. Presenters at the **1989 Take Charge Workshop** in Thorp, Wisconsin demonstrated that their practice of sustainable agriculture makes it possible for them to earn a livelihood and to farm the land in a responsible manner.

What Is Sustainable Agriculture?

What is sustainable agriculture? Many different answers have been given to this question. Ken McNamara, who is Midwest coordinator of the on-farm research for the Rodale Institute, which sponsored the workshop, quoted Wendell Berry that sustainable agriculture "erodes neither soil nor people." According to McNamara, this definition, although simple, contains a profound truth; to have true sustainability in agriculture, one needs to look at the social, ethical, and political, as well as biological aspects of food production.

In expanding upon this definition, McNamara identified five characteristics. First, sustainable agriculture seeks as much as possible to cover the ground through the winter. Overseeding legumes into standing crops is one way to do this, suggested McNamara. In the second place, he argued for a greater use of trees in order to make for a more permanent agriculture. Diversity in farming, with more animal based rather than cash crop agriculture, provides the third characteristic of a sustainable agricultural system.

In the fourth place, the input question must be addressed; here, sustainable agriculture differs from organic agriculture. "It is not absolutely wrong to use pesticides and herbicides. I note this not because I want to promote the increased use of these materials, but rather, one stands on flimsy ground if profitability is the chief argument in favor of a sustainable system. A sustainable system calls not for low inputs, but inputs that supply the needs of production in a way that sustains and enhances, rather than depletes, natural resources," he stated. This leads to the fifth consideration. "Much more is involved than changing farm management practices. It calls for us as a society to ask hard questions about what kind of agriculture we want, to set goals, and then go beyond the slogans and political rhetoric to put policies in place that will achieve those objectives," he contended.

McNamara cited the question of protecting the environment from the effects of certain farm practices. "Pollution of surface and groundwater is a significant problem caused by soil erosion and nitrogen and pesticide leaching. Why do we have a government program that, in essence, encourages millions of acres of continuous corn and soybeans, the crops that cause most of the problems, to be planted? What is the relationship of ownership patterns of farms and resource stewardship. What is the relationship of farm size to the use of materials that can cause environmental degradation," he asked.

In addition, McNamara brought up the question of the family farm. "If we, as a society, deem it desirable to have farms that can be owned or managed with little or no hired help, can these farmers prosper under free market conditions, which cause gyrations in the prices farmers receive? Should farm size be allowed to grow unrestricted? And what about the kinds of taxes imposed on property and inheritance?" he asked.

Dick And Sharon Thompson Practice Diversity

When Dick and Sharon Thompson told of their change in farming practices, the presentation sounded like the recounting of a conversion experience. In fact, Dick credited the work of the Spirit for coming to see a better way. When he graduated with a masters degree in animal production from Iowa State University in 1957, he went back to the home farm near Boone, Iowa to put his lessons into practice. By 1967, the whole farm was planted into continuous corn using chemical fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides. In 1968, the Thompsons decided to switch to the use of crop rotations without chemical inputs. "If we had not made the change, we would probably be out of farming today," Dick stated.

The Thompsons farm 300 acres, producing 120-bushel corn and 40-bushel beans along with hogs and cattle. By using a combination of techniques including ridge tilling, crop rotation, manure spreading, and cover crops, the Thompsons have reduced or eliminated herbicides, pesticides, and fertilizers. They plant 40% of their land into corn, 20% soybeans, 20% oats, and 20% hay. On the 80 home acres, Thompson uses a corn-soybeans-oats-meadow-meadow-meadow rotation. Half of that acreage is always in meadow. On the meadow ground, grazing cattle are alternated between two 20-acre pastures. Corn fields following meadow lands gave Thompsons their highest yields of 145 bushels.

Whereas Dick previously considered manure a problem simply to be gotten rid of, nowadays he stores the manure in a cement pit to be spread on the fields in the spring of the year. Then he incorporates the compost with a Miller offset disk in the fields. Sharon Thompson estimated that they save \$96.20 an acre in fuel and chemical costs on corn ground and \$45.50 on soybeans. As a result, they have not borrowed any money for their operation in the last sixteen years.

In addition, the Thompsons raise healthy hogs without drugs. With the use of open-air facilities they have cut housing and health care costs by more than half. Dick Thompson told how a balanced diet, daily exercise, lots of fresh air and sunshine are the guidelines they use in their 80-sow farrow-to-finish hog operation. "We learned the hard way that total confinement, which is how 7 out of 10 hogs are raised nowadays, creates disease problems that can only be cured with expensive medication. From 1967, when we started the farrow-to-finish enterprise, until 1978, when we built our new facilities, our hogs were farrowed in total confinement. Disease outbreaks worsened every year, finally peaking in 1978 with the loss of several baby pigs to scours. What made the incident so alarming is that the litter was from a sow and boar we'd bought from a highly respected supplier, who had raised the animals on low-level antibiotics. Our vet was able to isolate the E. coli strain that caused the scours and could find no drug capable of killing it," Sharon Thompson told.

Convinced that routine antibiotic use would soon become totally ineffective, or even illegal, they began seeking ways to eliminate such products from their hog system. Their search led them to plans for open-air farrowing, nursery and finishing units. "We wanted to simulate nature as closely as possible," Dick explained.

The Thompsons carry out other practices for raising healthy hogs: spreading ag lime in sleeping hutches to raise pH and to help control abscesses; immunizing gestating sows by exposing them to manure from farrowing pens; feeding beneficial bacteria (probiotics) to prevent disease organisms from gaining a foothold; protecting animals from weather with draft-free buildings and adequate bedding; choosing a medium-frame hog with a large lung capacity for open-air raising; weaning pigs at 5 to 6 weeks of age, when they are better able to withstand stress and diet changes; including oats and ground ear corn in gestation ration for bulk; adding manufactured lysine to pig starter ration, and omitting sugar; maintaining

16.5% protein with steamed, rolled oats; teaching hogs good bathroom habits by chasing them out of bedding areas in early morning.

Dick and Sharon Thompson concluded their presentation with a focus on balance. "Balance is needed in all these areas: spirit-soul-body; work and play; crop rotation; crops and animals; animal size; soil fertility; microbes in soil and animals; organic matter and minerals; nutrition; insects; tillage; weeds. Balance is needed between capital and labor. And last, but not least, balance is needed in your bank account," they explained.

"Adapt rather than adopt," Dick Thompson advised those interested in making for a more sustainable agriculture system. "Find those ideas that fit your own particular situation and then put them into practice." The Thompsons take part in the Rodale Institute on-farm research and give numerous presentations around the country. In addition they host a field day each September that attracts more than 500 people from all over the United States.



Karl Stieglitz explains how rotational grazing of his dairy cattle is made possible with the use of portable fencing.

Farmers Convinced Of Worth Of Rotational Grazing

Karl Stieglitz, of Greenwood, Wisconsin, also participates in the Rodale Institute on-farm research and shared his experience of rotational grazing. In this system, Stieglitz uses portable fencing to fence the dairy cattle into designated grazing areas that are small enough to limit excess trampling of grazed forages. Every other day, the cattle are moved to another area, leaving already grazed areas to regrowth without additional trampling by the cattle. A connecting lane allows the cattle access to water at the barn. Stieglitz sees a definite savings in that he does not need to mechanically harvest the forage needed to feed the 35 head of

dairy youngstock that the fencing holds. In addition he does not have to haul the manure from the barn that would have been created by the young stock.

In addition to the rotational grazing, Stieglitz told of a notable accomplishment during the drought of 1988. On five acres he planted rye for seed; the cost of \$50 to \$60 yielded 50 bushels of rye seed and 100 bales of straw. On another 20 acres, he plowed down rye on May 15 and on May 22 drilled 40 pounds of seed to the acre — 30 pounds of corn and 10 pounds of drought resistant sorghum sudan grass. This acreage yielded 250 tons of silage. "The dry matter plowed down helped to hold the moisture," Stieglitz explained. "The combination made for a tremendous amount of feed. I would certainly do it again."

Stieglitz touted the value of rye. "When I plant rye in the fall, I have three options. I can make feed from it in the spring if I know I will be short. Or I can make seed and feed. Also I can plow the rye down. The third option is preferred because it makes mellow soil," Stieglitz stated. "Then, too, rye and sorghum possess important allelopathic effects."

According to Dan Patenaude, of Highland, Wisconsin, who helped Stieglitz establish his fencing system, rotational grazing is nothing new. Shepherds in biblical times practiced it, and more recently farmers in Britain. New Zealanders developed quick-pulse, high-shock electric fences so that shepherds could graze their animals 10 months of the year.

Patenaude stressed the importance of learning the dynamics of the plant community. The regrowth potential allows for grasses that grow more easily in a given area, such as red clover on the Stieglitz farm. There is less need to try to establish grasses that will not grow well in an area, he added. "We need to work with the plant community to our advantage," Patenaude stated. "Why fight Mother Nature?"

Mike Cannell, of Cazenovia, Wisconsin, also told of the virtues he has discovered in rotational grazing. Cannell, who together with Stieglitz and Patenaude belong to the Southern Wisconsin Farmers Research Network, said he switched to this system because he wanted to put the cows out on fresh pasture on the first day of spring. In addition, he has gotten away from green chopping. "Cows like grazing. We should respect what a cow does naturally. Let cows do the work. I am against confinement farming," Cannell said.

Cannell, who milks 32 Jerseys on his 235-acre farm, started 4 or 5 years ago to wean himself away from the use of chemicals. "This changing of a way of farming is like swimming in cold water. A person sticks in one foot at a time," Cannell explained. He expressed concern about groundwater pollution and pesticide buildup. "As a people this country is not going to tolerate that kind of chemical use much longer," he contended.

Conclusion

As I reflected on this **Take Charge Workshop** and other similar demonstration projects I have attended, I was struck by a number of observations. Many farmers are moving in the direction of a sustainable agriculture. In the process, they are practicing a better stewardship of the land and realizing a decreased dependence on purchased inputs. Together with this, many of these farmers are making connections to the larger context. Greater self-reliance keeps families on the farm, people on the land, and capital in rural communities. Public health is tied to how farming is practiced in that polluted food, soil, air, and water bring about illness and disease. The whole human community depends on maintaining a resource base that makes possible the production of safe, healthy, and nutritious food. Also, farming in harmony with nature enhances the beauty of the created world. Finally, in order to sustain wildlife, agriculture must be practiced in a sustainable manner.

A Theology Of Mutual Support And Of Active Struggle

The challenge of this book is not only to think differently, but also to act differently. In order to do this, a theology is needed that will inform both our thoughts and actions. I believe that the cross and resurrection of Jesus the Christ speaks to people of faith who would be agents of change. A theology of mutual support and of active struggle grows out of the conviction that Christ's death and life empowers people to engage in such a work.

A Theology Of Mutual Support

"But we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are" (1 Corinthians 1: 23-24, 27-28).

A growing number of people in rural America are experiencing pain and suffering. The reality of poverty no longer seems far and distant in other countries or in other parts of this country. Poverty strikes home. These life conditions call for a theology of mutual support.

Breaking Through The Culture Of Silence

For people whose circumstances in life have changed dramatically, oftentimes a culture of silence begins to encircle them. They lose a sense of dignity and personhood. Life is lived with a focus on personal survival. In their hopelessness, people deny the world and flee from it. But the message of the cross and resurrection is that, in the midst of despair, people of faith discover hope; in this hope, they break through the culture of silence. No longer do they see life in a purely individualistic way, but with a social cohesion. This social sense enables them to gain a greater sense of what it means to be truly human. They face the difficult circumstances of life with greater confidence because of mutual support.

Leaders And Participants Work Together

One of the big problems that agents of change encounter is the inability of leaders and participants to work together. At times, those who are powerless emulate the same kind of dominating spirit as those who are powerful. Leaders lord it over participants; participants undermine the effectiveness of leaders. Leaders take advantage of participants; participants take leaders for granted. Group process becomes dysfunctional. People of faith can work through this divisiveness in order to affect a mutual support between leaders and participants. From a faith perspective, people take seriously the brokenness of life and the ways in which it impedes subjects from upholding each other. The cross and resurrection gives a fortitude that enables leaders and participants to work together for the common good.

Identifying With Those Who Are In Pain

People of faith, who take seriously the cross and resurrection, are called to more closely identify with those in pain and suffering. Jesus the Christ spent much of his ministry with those considered to be low and despised. Because of this, the apostle Paul can state that God has chosen what is foolish to shame the wise and what is weak to shame the strong. This view from below enables people of faith to engage in dialog with those who suffer. People of faith listen to their problems and difficulties, hopes and aspirations.

A Theology Of Active Struggle

“Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2).

Support goes hand in hand with struggle. Those who seek to be involved in the active struggle for a more just and humane society need to live in mutual support in order to gain strength for the strenuous venture. To strive only for mutual support is to live in a cocoon; to strive only for active struggle is to work without bearings. A theology of mutual support and a theology of active struggle complement each other.

Being Engaged In A Work To Make Life More Humane

In the midst of deteriorating social and economic conditions, many people of faith are struggling to live out their commitment to the gospel and its message of peace and justice. A theology of struggle grows out of the context of ordinary folk seeking to reflect on the Bible in light of their daily experiences. An important element in the theology of struggle comes in making a critical analysis of the society. People of faith are willing to look at the social and economic structures from the bottom and strive to change them. Critical analysis leads to transforming action. In this transforming action, people of faith believe that each person is created in the image of God and that the earth is the Lord's to be used for the benefit of all. People of faith believe that the culture is capable of being changed so that patterns of exploitation can be replaced by ways of participation. At times, social change can happen quickly — as in a *kairos* moment. At other times, social change occurs slowly, almost imperceptibly, to the effect that progress is difficult to measure. People of faith hold forth an alternative vision in the midst of the dominant culture.

Acknowledging Personal Complicity Within Societal Structures

People of faith can bring a unique contribution to the struggle for social change in an acknowledgement of personal complicity within societal structures. Such a stance helps to counter some of the self-righteousness that too often afflicts certain groups of people who identify themselves as part of the struggle. Awareness of individual culpability drives people of faith to look at the issues in a more profound way than simply as an ideological conflict. I am well aware that these statements fly in the face of many who consider themselves as having their consciousness raised. But I would counter that, without an admission of being part of the problem, satisfactory solutions will never be accomplished. The cross and resurrection of Jesus the Christ gives the freedom to admit the powerful hold brokenness exerts on both individual and corporate life. In so doing, the way is opened to experience the reality of what Paul stated — not to be conformed to the world but to be transformed.

In The Midst Of Death Comes The Gift Of Life

For those who believe that the cross and resurrection informs a theology of struggle, death becomes the occasion for the birth of new life. In the midst of life experienced as fragile, people of faith live out what it means to be truly human by acknowledging that life has limits. When the circumstances of life push people to the farthest reaches, people of faith believe that strength comes out of weakness, and that growth comes out of pain. In the midst of being shaken to the core, people of faith live in confidence that, if the cause is right and just, it is worth doing with conviction and determination. In the midst of darkness, people of faith believe in the power of light to illumine the way in order to make this world more humane so that each and every person may live with greater dignity. In the midst of sadness, people of faith carry on with joy by taking delight in each other's company, savoring each moment as precious, energizing each other and being energized. People of faith accept life as a gift, affirm life, celebrate life, and struggle mightily for life.

Part V

Seeking The Common Good Through The Family Farm

“First, moderate-sized farms operated by families on a full-time basis should be preserved and their economic viability protected. Similarly small farms and part-time farming, particularly in areas close to cities, should be encouraged. As we have noted elsewhere in this pastoral letter, there is genuine social and economic value in maintaining a wide distribution in the ownership of productive property.

“The democratization of decision making and control of land resulting from wide distribution of farm ownership are protections against concentration of power and consequent possible loss of responsiveness to public need in this crucial sector of the economy. Moreover, when those who work in an enterprise also share in its ownership, their active commitment to the purpose of the endeavor and their participation in it are enhanced.

“Ownership provides incentives for diligence and is a source of an increased sense that the work being done is one’s own. This is particularly significant in a sector as vital to human well-being as agriculture.”

Economic Justice For All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy.
Food and Agriculture. pages 106-107.

A Spirit Of Perseverance In The Face of Adversity

What keeps people going over the long haul in the struggle to achieve social justice? I have wrestled with this question in my own involvement and have sought answers in my encounters with others who are actively engaged in the work. Out of this quest I offer a characterization of *a spirit of perseverance in the face of adversity* with the desire that you may discover resources of strength in your struggle to make this world more humane.

Conversion

To be converted to the struggle for social justice is to experience a change in such a way as to see life from a new perspective. Oftentimes the circumstances of life may force people into unanticipated directions. Some may become newly poor; others come into contact in a significant way with those who are in difficult straits. As a result, people gain a new perception of the plight of those who suffer. Life is not the same; it takes on new intensity.

No longer is personal faith divorced from active involvement in the world. Both are radicalized in the sense of going to the root of the matter. Those who live in the spirit of perseverance open themselves to a constant conversion in order to gain a fuller identification with those who are dispossessed. In this way, they are led into new and surprising avenues for carrying on the struggle.

Commitment

People of perseverance live with an overall attitude and a particular posture toward life of commitment. In this stance they accept the work of the Spirit in pointing to the many and various ways to do justice with the poor and the oppressed. People take conscious responsibility for their own destiny. Conditions do not have to remain the way they have always been. The number of people actively involved in the struggle for social justice may seem small and identifiable results few, but the Spirit gives energy to keep going.

Hope allows people of perseverance to believe that they are connected to a force in this world above and beyond themselves. They are involved in something bigger than the sum of the individual parts. Such a dedication does not personify itself so much as a duty to be performed, but as a life's work in which to be engaged.

Courage

Living according to the Spirit entails risk and danger. The future in the struggle for social justice promises conflict and confrontation. Walking the path of active involvement leads one through detours and blind alleys. Gone are the assurances and securities so often taken for granted. Such an outlook is not very comforting, is it? In the face of such adversity, those who demonstrate a spirit of perseverance have learned to live with courage.

Courage is that *fortitude* to face up to the obstacles and see in them possibilities, to encounter opposition and view it as challenge; that *striving* to battle the forces of injustice and oppression, and to rise to the occasion under such circumstances; that *daring* to give concrete expression of one's commitment to social justice. This courage begets courage, as the Spirit uses the actions to inspire further work.

Confidence

The struggle for social justice is fueled by the desire for a more effective share in the exercise of power and for a more active role in history. This longing also manifests itself in people desiring to be more in command of themselves and of their role in their larger society. In experiencing conversion, people with such longings and desires are no longer willing to accept themselves as objects in which the trials of life are forced upon them; they consider themselves as subjects in which they can exercise individual and corporate decisions. They have discovered a human dignity that makes them unique persons.

People of perseverance have learned to live in confidence. They are confident in the abiding *presence* of the Spirit to lead and guide, to empower and energize; of their *ability* to articulate those longings and desires and to carry out personal responsibility and social action; and in the *value* of working in concert with others committed to social justice. Because of a strong belief that long-lasting social change can only come from the bottom up, they see beyond the inevitable setbacks to the long haul. Such confidence buoys people's hopes even when actual conditions seem hopeless.

Conviviality

To live with conviviality is to experience joy and gladness, festivity and celebration. Even in the face of adversity, people in the spirit of perseverance can express their confidence through mirth and merriment. Lightheartedness and laughter characterize those who believe that doom and despair will not have the last word. The gladness of those who look at life from below acts in a subversive manner in that those who look at life from on top are disquieted. A spirit of conviviality reveals a hope that cannot be squelched.

The kind of stridency, which makes for joyless company, must be avoided like the plague. Nothing kills spirit faster than a sullen attitude always critical of fellow workers for not measuring up to certain ideological standards. If such stridency becomes the trademark of those committed to social justice, the question can rightly be asked, "Then what is the use?" In the midst of the gravity of social conditions, levity in the people of perseverance adds a necessary balance. Conviviality becomes energizing in the struggle for social justice.

Context

People of perseverance see their work as being done within a context. The individual life of faith is not lived out in a vacuum. Historical realities call for a thoughtful and assertive response. Reflection on the life of faith goes hand in hand with the struggle for social justice. If reflection and struggle are divorced from each other, life becomes a dichotomy. On the one hand, attention only to the personal life of faith allows the social structure to run its own course without the checks and balances of constructive criticism from those people of spirit committed to social justice. On the other hand, attention only to the social struggle leads to an activism simply for the sake of being active and an immediatism simply for the sake of addressing the most pressing issues.

A spirit of perseverance in the face of adversity expresses a belief that the God of the Exodus event is the God of history here and now, and that the Lord Jesus Christ of the cross and resurrection is the Lord of history here and now. As such, people of perseverance understand history in such a way as to take conscious responsibility for their own future. There are possibilities for changing the world to become a more humane place, and the Spirit is actively involved in making that happen. People of spirit draw strength from the knowledge that they can keep going over the long haul because of the Spirit.

Making The Choice For The Family Farm

This book began with the question — “Family farm or factory farm?” Throughout this study, these two forms of agriculture have been contrasted. A choice confronts those who live and work on the land as well as all those who eat the food grown on the land. In this concluding chapter, I would like to argue for the importance of *making the choice for the family farm*. I invite you — as family farmers and friends of the family farm — to make a choice for a family farm system that is exemplified by the following characteristics.

Produces Food And Fiber

As we walk into a supermarket, we have a difficult time not to take for granted the spectacular bounty of fish and vegetables, choice meats, and fresh milk that fill the shelves. Or we used to. That is until we heard about hormone implants as well as antibiotics in beef, poultry, and milk, parathion and other pesticides in fruits and vegetables, Alar in apples, and dieldrin and other chemicals in both freshwater and sea fish. Many people are becoming aware that the food we buy, nutritious and delicious, may be hazardous to our health. In this way, those who consume the food are related to those who produce the food.

The 97% of the population off the farm look to the 3% of the people on the farm to produce food that not only tastes good but is good for us. A factory farm system of agriculture heavily dependent upon pesticides and chemicals has increased health risks for the public. In the midst of all this, though, is a growing consciousness of the need for safe food and fiber. According to a March 16-17, 1989 Gallup Poll completed for Newsweek magazine, 73% of the people think we should use fewer pesticides and chemicals to ensure safer food even if it means higher prices. A responsive family farm system of agriculture could produce safe food and fiber to meet this demand.

Protects The Health Of The Land

“Water, water everywhere, but none of it is safe to drink.” Sound far fetched? In the not too distant future, this statement may be more fact than fiction. Even now some people in the U.S. have to drive for miles and carry water home in plastic containers, while others pay for testing, water filters, and purification systems. Since 97% of rural Americans get their drinking water from groundwater systems, they have particular reason to be concerned. Nitrates, hazardous wastes, pesticides, and other chemicals are contaminating groundwater systems. Cleaning up contaminated water is difficult if not impossible.

Prevention of groundwater contamination is cheaper and easier. This task becomes a goal for those who would practice a farming system that does not put life in jeopardy and does not use methods, which deplete the soil or the water. Again, to do the job right will require that farmers become weaned from the use of problem chemicals, which are causing the contamination, and that people voluntarily change the way they handle chemicals. Programs are needed that tax problem chemicals in order to pay for and encourage alternative ways of storing and disposing of chemicals. Prevention of soil erosion is also cheaper and easier than its cure. Conservation plans are needed to bring the soil loss down to a rate that is renewed each year. In that way the thin, fragile skin of topsoil can be passed on to others. The cost of soil conservation programs most likely will need to be shared by the general public, because society as a whole has a stake in maintaining the fertility of the land.

Practices A Dispersed Ownership Of Farmland

The vast majority of people, including those who do not own farmland, have a stake in keeping the control of agricultural land dispersed as widely as possible. The following reasons address matters of broad social good:

- Land owned and operated by a family for generations offers the best chance of being cared for in a responsible stewardship over the long haul, rather than for the short term.
- A dispersed ownership of the land makes possible a larger population base in the rural areas so that communities and institutions are allowed to survive and grow.
- Concentration of land and wealth leads to a lack of individual opportunities. A wide distribution contributes to a greater participatory decision making.

Shall the land be owned by the few or many? If this country is reduced to factory farms, the many will have to submit their livelihoods to the few. With the land kept in the hands of family farmers, property becomes democratically divided and democratic liberties practiced.

Preserves A Quality of Life For Farmers And Society

The industrial perspective has robbed work of much of its dignity and quality. This is true in much of society. While farmers have long prided themselves in exercising discretion over their work, a great deal of the pride in working with craft and skill is being demeaned by a shift to a factory farm mentality. For the first time in our history, more than half of the farm work is being performed by hired and not family labor. With this change, workers and farmers are being deprived of the ability to use their judgment and critical faculties. Decisions on how the work is to be done are made by others than those doing the work.

The family farm is one of the last remaining places where people are responsible from start to finish for what is made. Men and women, boys and girls join in a common task. People who seek to preserve the family farm can at the same time herald the cause of all people who seek greater self-direction, responsibility, and meaning in their vocations. Work by those who are self-employed or by those who are part of worker-owned businesses would give greater satisfaction. Work could be more than just a job; it would be connected to a larger sense of community purpose.

Provides A Living For The Farm Family

Family farmers cannot be expected to produce food and fiber, protect the health of the land, practice a dispersed ownership of farmland, and preserve a quality of life for themselves and society as a whole without enjoying the benefits that provides a living for the farm family. Farmers find themselves in a double squeeze between inputs and outputs. Farmers purchase inputs, such as land, seed, fertilizers, pesticides, feed, and machinery, and sell their outputs to corporations that process, market, and retail products. While the prices farmers receive for their products have increased only 6% since 1952, the prices they have paid for their materials have gone up 122%.

The chances of farmers making a decent livelihood can be enhanced in two ways — to increase the prices farmers receive for their products and to decrease the amount spent on variable expenses. People of goodwill can take on the formidable challenge of changing government policy so that people of the land receive a fair return for their products, while at the same time making sure that supply is adjusted to demand. In the more immediate future, family farmers can take part of the future into their own hands by finding alternatives to factory farm practices. Such changes deserve the support by friends of the family farm.

Discussion Questions

Part I Farming As A Matter Of Scale

- 1.) What evidences of the industrialization of agriculture do you see in this country?
- 2.) What kind of future do you envision for family farming in the United States?
- 3.) The findings of various groups and individuals are cited to show how Americans are affected by the industrialization of agriculture. With which of the critiques do you agree? Disagree? How are their recommendations for change similar? Different? Do you agree with their proposals? Disagree?
- 4.) How is the United States involved in the Philippines? What role do you think the U.S. should play in that country?
- 5.) What connections can you make between the rural poor in the United States and those who suffer from hunger and poverty in the Philippines?

Part II Farmers In The Third World Fight To Stay On The Land

- 1.) What impresses you most about the farmers in the third world in their fight to stay on the land?
- 2.) How can farmers in this country learn from their counterparts in the third world?
- 3.) Debt is a big issue in the Philippines as well as for poor people around the world. Which of the two views presented on how to handle the debt do you favor? What do you think should be done about the debt in this country?
- 4.) Discuss the two different types of development. Do you agree that a certain kind of development can foster dependency? Disagree? What does the experience of people of the land in West Africa have to say to farm people in rural America?

Part III Contending For The Family Farm In The Hay River Valley

- 1.) Look at the food in your refrigerator, deep freezer, and shelves. Where did it come from originally? What kind of work went into producing and processing it?
- 2.) What is your experience in producing your food through farming? Gardening?
- 3.) (An exercise for non-farmers) How do you imagine the conditions of farm people? How is their survival related to your well-being? What values, which you hold important, came out of the rural context?
- 4.) What stands out in your mind from the drought of 1988? 1930s? What lessons did you learn that you will take with you into the 1990s?
- 5.) How do you think people can organize on a grassroots level in order to shape farm policy? What kind of legislation do you think should be passed in order to preserve a family farm system of agriculture?
- 6.) What efforts can small groups take on in order to improve conditions in your immediate area?
- 7.) How adequate is private land ownership as a system of land tenure? How is land a common heritage? What advantages do you see to placing land in a trust? Disadvantages?

Part IV People Of Faith Join Fight To Preserve The Family Farm

- 1.) How would you answer the question posed by Wes Jackson? — "Is the idea of a Christian ecology some Johnny-come-lately contrivance to make our religious tradition relevant in the modern world? Or is proper and responsible ecological behavior inextricably imbedded in the Judaic-Christian tradition awaiting discovery, new meaning, and elucidation?"
- 2.) According to Wes Jackson, "The system that makes Iowa Beef possible and even compelling makes Pantex inevitable." Do you agree with this statement? Disagree? Explain.
- 3.) In what ways do you think the church can best carry out a social involvement?
- 4.) The author suggests that the Exodus event can be a paradigm for us today. From your understanding of the biblical account, how do you think this is possible?
- 5.) Rep. David Osterberg appealed to church people to engage in voluntary solutions so that less regulatory means can be used to protect the environment. He argued that Christians can band together to form a political force to save the creation. How do you respond to these assertions?
- 6.) How would you define sustainable agriculture? What specific practices can be implemented to make agriculture more sustainable?
- 7.) The author maintains that mutual support and active struggle complement each other. Share with the group your experience in these two areas.

Part V Seeking The Common Good Through The Family Farm

- 1.) How would you define the common good?
- 2.) The author suggests six aspects of *a spirit of perseverance in the face of adversity*. Which of these are most meaningful to you? What keeps you going in the struggle?
- 3.) The author proposes five characteristics for a family farm system of agriculture. Do you agree with these? Disagree? What kind of agriculture do you think best serves the common good?

FAMILY FARM OR FACTORY FARM? A TIME TO CHOOSE

"Lowell Bolstad has again shown his knowledge of the global connectedness of rural America and its needs, to those brothers and sisters of the Third World countries, who have already experienced the horrors of environmental and human destruction at the hands of the rich and powerful. The question is, 'How long will it take for we farmers who till the soil to wake up and demonstrate the *passionate anger* that we should be experiencing to bring about the change needed to benefit all rural people who have lost their destiny, dignity, and faith both here and abroad?'

"Everyone reading this book should take responsibility for passing it on and passing out many copies. It is a wonderful educational tool, relating hands-on ideas and experiences, as well as giving a synopsis of history that many folks have not read. This book shows how people *inch by inch* have worked together to bring about much needed change in their own corner of the world and how each person interviewed has lit the candle of hope through which the flickering flame of humanity will leave a legacy of action, caring and sharing to future generations. Someone did struggle and speak out. Many have suffered and died in protest and action against the social injustices and greed wrought upon whole nations of people. Our legacy will not be measured in fame and fortune, but rather faith, hope, and charity. Thanks Lowell Bolstad."

Jeanne and John Rohl — Dairy Farmers — Prescott, Wisconsin

"Recent developments have made it increasingly evident that the world is facing, not just a short-term crisis in agriculture, but a long-term, chronic crisis involving agriculture, economics, the environment, and above all the human community. This book challenges us to consider the depth of the impact of this crisis on every resident of Our Mother the Earth. It speaks, first, to the concern of each rural resident who sees the entire face of the community being altered. This book is also an excellent resource for urban people who are beginning to feel the effects of the economic and environmental changes on their lives.

"Even while many have become members of farm support groups, have advocated for those who have chosen to leave farming, or have provided assistance to those who have been forced off the farm, a deep, fundamental social and public policy question remains unanswered. In light of the growing environmental, economic, and community crisis, which form of agriculture will we support: the family farm or the factory farm? This book presents a clear, eloquent, passionate defense of the family farm."

Pastor Richard J. Brueschhoff — Assistant to the Bishop — Rural Ministry —
Northwest Synod of Wisconsin — Rice Lake, Wisconsin

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