A Working White Paper on Historical Implications of the

Impact of Government Policy in Agriculture and life:

A series of personal essays

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Preface

The profile of American agriculture has accentuated the profitability of corporate business in the commerce of that which agriculture produces but done so at the cost of the loss of the defused family farm base that assured long term survivability of the nation from want for the first one-hundred thirty years of its' existence. But the hidden costs have been high in terms of the long term interest on national debt incurred by the policy and which the people, through their labor and taxation will be obliged to pay and the loss of the family farm equity base.

The truest resolve to this dilemma is to reinstate the diversification that once prevailed in America's heartlands by a reinvestment into family farming and a free market and divestment of the economic and authoritarian control by the commerce and government end of the profile.

Significant to this process was the erection of a regulatory construct to facilitate a policy created a half century ago to abandon free market competition in the production area and control prices and capital investment through government programs.

Reduce the volume of the Agriculture Department and redirect its mission toward that expostulated by its enabling act of 1862-63. Remove the program orientation to subsidize farmers and concurrently manipulate the price index and to rely on free market adjustments to stabilize the production of agricultural products. Restrict the agency to technical roles and withdraw from policymaking and enforcement. Shift the profile away from inputs to production and marketing and consolidate regional marketing and self-sufficiency.

American Agriculture faces a perilous future if as yet unacknowledged liabilities, the result of one-sided thinking and self-interest, should be permitted to set the agenda in the new century, as was the case in the last.

This working paper is an effort to identify, analyze and hopefully seek for a solution to the problems enumerated here.

The view in this work is the culmination of so many inputs from so many farmers and interested others who have shared themselves with this reporter and we trust the perspective is a road less traveled, perhaps not popular but necessary to consider.

Thank you

Agricultural Subsidy: Failure or Boon?

The True Cost of Food

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We seek to determine, historically, the relative success of farm subsidies contribution to provide the nation with food and fiber at a cost that was reasonable long term for the economy and to consider the ramifications of that legacy today.

Subsidy, for purposes of this discussion, is any government grant, whether direct *or indirect*, to a private enterprise considered of benefit to the public. Government expenditure, for purposes of this discussion may be both overt budgetary inputs AND off budget, which deprive the public revenue or reapportion economic resources prejudicially, unjustly benefiting one group over another to obtain an advantage or profit **at cost** to the public.

On the supply side, there are at least three sources of active subsidy of corporate commodity agri-business. Two are from government; direct and indirect while the third is non-government.

The largely mythological, because it's variations and complexities are probably the least understood, and most recognized, though it has actually become the minority producer, is the **direct** subsidy to that part of the (family) farm owner operator production base from government, by either direct or indirect loans, debt relief, restructuring, compensation, set asides, deficiency payments or other. This is often derisively referred to as *agricultural welfare*.

Even though production costs may be similar to corporate farming, the profile of indenture and additional regulatory constraints incumbent to that are added liabilities which in a competitive environment with paper thin margins of profitability, even in the most ideal of circumstances, is sufficient without external economic assistance to destroy even the most pristinely managed farm.

A second, indirect, has been equity building of ranches and farms capitalized as secondary businesses from other primary business profits which build liquidity from monies which otherwise would have gone for taxes on corporate earnings. This deduct

from the gross revenue base is only available to those who have access to a cash reserve from a primary business and shifts the burden of revenue enhancement to the working majority middle class who do not have similar access to such economic resource. This is *corporate* welfare about which one may speculate as to whether it translates or equals corporate philanthropy benefiting society on the other end in an industry not known for its charity.

The third type of subsidy is the emerging small farm production base that obtains primary *income from other sources* and with ***that*** income *re-capitalizes the small farm* from year to year *out of **other** earnings* on the hope of a profit from the agricultural venture. These do in some instances accommodate certain niche markets where demand is sufficient to meet the actual cost to produce. This segment is growing very fast.

"Let's talk about commodities, dear."

A (food) commodity, by its very nature, is indistinguishable as to its production source and you may note that any commodity at the point of commerce has been subsidized from *some* source, which keeps the base artificially low.

When, at this time, the United States government would suggest that about eight percent of the gross household income is spent on food and fibre, it is not reasonable that this estimate is reached *without* factoring in the offset of cost dedicated from tax revenue and private investment from other sources which does not extinguish the differential of true cost of food and fiber.

"How the heck did we get *here*, Clarence?"

It is important to understand the foundations of the newest era of agrarian reform, which will be necessitated in a new millennium as a consequence of a century of experimentation from the policies of twentieth century, which in turn was the consequence of the century before. Short-term solutions do not suffice where long-term problems abide. This is a very long-term problem.

The Victorian Era and the period following the end of World War I were conspicuous for the migration of farm laboring populations, to open new lands before the Golden age (of Agriculture) and to industrialized urban areas after.

In droves, many Americans **did** leave behind the devastation of the American Civil War, moving, along with new armies of foreign immigrants to set down new roots west. For about twenty years these families, of necessity, engaged in fundamentally a colonial type economy, producing agricultural products for their own use or barter in the community and trading on the "cash crops" to attend the monetary costs of industrial goods and amenities they could not produce for themselves. This commerce was a self regulated free market, balanced because the families and communities were also the primary consumers. Production, predicated on limited and known consumption, being regional, commerce of essentials and surpluses were, in a rudimentary way, instantly market adjusted against the need. Critical variables were ***not*** necessarily or primarily economic but limiting factors such as weather, labor, time (seasons) and natural resource capacity.

Off budget, or indirect *subsidies* certainly included the "free" land wrested from the previous inhabitants, the administrative costs of territorial governance, as surveying, clerical duty, etc. and a martial presence to maintain.

But with time compression, the advent of improved transportation technology, as the railroads and steam powered shipping and new preservation strategies and mechanisms made central markets over longer distances feasible, especially for perishable goods, while communications technology, as telegraphy, made trans-urban business practical, these technologies accelerated faster than the actual knowledge about product availability, surpluses/shortages and demand. In a sense they pushed the development of disciplines to record and track data in a way that had never been before except perhaps in the realm of military logistics. But even *that* "market" merely reacted to a projection of demand attendant to some other primary mission.

Marketing, a discipline as we know it, a deliberate *proactive consumption* ***behavioral shaping process***, is strictly an animal of the twentieth century.

By 1890, there could be inferred from the record a relative parity of population from urban environs as against agrarian. But most hailed originally from farm community backgrounds and even large urban areas had significant agricultural components. No one from either origin was unaware of the significance of agriculture and that thinking was integrated into the general mean of consensus, giving a slight bias

to agrarian interests in the legislative forum. Thus the universal popular recognition of agriculture as important put it at the head of priorities, at least equal to industry politically; probably the best posture since the American War of Independence.

Most direct subsidy programs began after the period we call the Agrarian Reform Revolution from 1895 to 1920. Agrarian Reform was THE legislative issue in the "Golden Age of Agriculture". This grassroots Reform movement could be construed the legislative stepchild of the westward expansion of the United States; of the nation's technical evolution in the fields of transportation and communication and that the popular majority, while still primarily agrarian, were socially and politically aware, highly motivated and, by and large, fairly literate.

This socio-economic revolution was less an organized effort in its beginning than the spontaneous alignment of consensus, a particular sensitivity to the socio-political and economic environment under which farmers were evolving and necessarily had to adapt. Though farming had been reactive to the implications of the day up to about nineteen hundred, with the gaining momentum of the Grange Movement, the first formally organized national grass roots representation; agricultural producers became politically proactive to very good effect. They represented an independent capital block with real political power.

"Take a breather, brother...It's the global thing."

A popular sentiment in today's business environment is that "Global business is local business." This is new? The forty-niners sent their dirty laundry all the way to China on the same ships that brought them rice to eat in the California goldfields. America's only recorded "Emperor", a former investment speculator named Norton, became a bit unhinged when, in 1856, having invested everything he had in a shipload of rice with which he thought he would corner the market in San Francisco, was distraught to see another ship full of rice hove into port just ahead of the arrival of *his* ship. Today we refer to this phenomenon as "Dot com".

The watchwords for globalization as the known world expanded in the long ago were "Colonization" and "Empire". "Slave trade", "ivory trade"," China trade", "silk route", "Spice trade", "Barbary Pirates", "Boxer Rebellion", "Louisiana Purchase", "Sewards Folly": any of these terms ring a bell? Global business was *always* local

business; when was it ever **not?** Try "British Empire", upon which the sun never set. Americans didn't invent this stuff. Hold that thought.

"What did you do in the war, Daddy?"

Agricultural economic conditions for producers improved still more after The United States entered the World War in 1917 when, for the first time since the War of Independence, on their own merit, farmer's per-capita income matched non-farm income per-capita and they could finally have been said to have briefly attained genuine wealth; equity.

But contracts tapered off quickly with the end of hostilities. Government policy swung away from Agrarian Reform, as the farm segment financial base contracted, and went headlong into industrialization, urban development and the theoretical objective raising the standard of living for all Americans, many of whom had transitioned into industrialized, urban America. There was a popular song toward the end of the World War that asked, "how ya gonna keep 'em down on the farm once they've seen gay Paris'?" A million doughboys, home from the war who didn't go back to the farm, many of whom found there was no farm to go back to, joined them.

In 1916, anticipating a new potential urge in agribusiness, the Congress created a new farm credit system to guarantee loans and get expansion capital out into production agriculture. As the war progressed, fulfilling that expectation, lenders had speculated that the war would last at least another two years and were willing to lend more monies based on the inflated wartime market and farmers became paper rich almost overnight from 1914 to 1917 on sales of everything needed to feed and clothe armies and the civilian population where European agriculture had all but ground to a halt. The entry of the United States into what had become a fairly stalemated European conflict shortened the war by several years. Overextended family farm producers, instantly caught off balance by the armistice, defaulted by the millions when the economy contracted within only a few months, resulting in an agricultural *recession* fully nine years before there was a depression. From 1929 to 1932, farm prices fell an additional fifty percent while the inputs to produce fell only 32%. The Grange withered in a fallow economic field.

"We need to do something about those guys camped on the mall."

The Hoover administration wanted to repay the national debt undertaken by the Wilson Administration to finance our investment in the First World War but on a fixed budget with no further deficits. The policy neglected to provide any contingency reserve for the capital revitalization of the farm production sector as economic conditions worsened.

Mr. Hoover was neither uncaring as a citizen nor unsympathetic as a person. And before his election to the Presidency, he had shown himself to be a splendid administrator and visionary of huge scope when fashioning programs to feed Europe as it got back on its feet after the cessation of hostilities of the First War. He was never opposed to any reasonable and, to his mind, cost effective expenditures to help *stimulate the economy* and, in so doing, help everyday people.

There was some stopgap legislation in the twenties to attempt subsidy assistance for the dispossessed farmers, living in the direst circumstances imaginable, as they still tried to produce a living sharecropping on lands they no longer controlled at the pleasure of the banks that did. The banks only concern was to try to recoup some of their losses from the over extension of credit from the First War. Subsidies were meant to ease the pitiable conditions of those farmers. But they had no substantial equity and no effective voice in political affairs anymore. Guided by the banking industry's very effective lobbying, the legislation initiated to reconstruct the farm infrastructure was instead crafted on the assumption that, just as the sharecropper shared up his labor in the form of division of the crop, so the landholder would share down the subsidies. The precept would be popularly referred to fifty years later as the "trickle down effect". The value of the crop was equity and the landholders, the banks, had the equity. But the *value of the labor* was just *cost* and the status of the sharecropper just a contract. And so the language of these enabling acts substituted the titleholders, the *equity holders*, as the direct recipients of the assistance with no absolute provisions for its distribution to the sharecroppers. **Equity got the subsidies.** This did reduce the banking deficits and stimulated economic "growth" but it did nothing to help the farmers for whom the excuse was given to justify the legislations to begin with. It was the worst kind of *corporate* welfare and did not accomplish the original intention of the legislation.

"The operation was a success but the patient died."

The Roosevelt administration in 1932 reintroduced deficit spending in peacetime beyond the war debt, that the national income tax of 1913 was assumed meant to repay, without guarantees of future revenue to re-capitalize and subsidize those *parts of the economy* and *torn social fabric* upon whose foundations the country depended and, incidentally, worst hit by the depression.

It was an *economic* issue, artificial, never a question of technical inferiority or physical incapacity of agriculture producers to produce. As family farmers met both criteria of need, farmers had high priority for assistance, which they were only too glad to accept.

The President approved the Agricultural Adjustment Act of May 12, 1933 to achieve ***parity*** (defined) income for farmers to the levels 1900 to 1919 by:

1) Securing voluntary acreage reductions from producers with subsidy to stabilize commodity flow,

2) Regulate marketing through agreements between producers, production associations and distributors,

3) Licensing those producers, processors, associations and distributors to eliminate unfair practices and charges; which effect also restricted competition,

4) And to provide a mechanism to determine the necessity for levying of taxes and at what rates on agricultural products to in part repay the cost of these adjustments.

Under this body of enabling acts, on 4 October, 1933 the Federal Surplus Relief Corporation (later named the Federal Surplus Commodities Corporation) was established to procure food to distribute to unemployed impoverished families under the concurrently formed Federal Emergency Relief Corporation. Thirteen days later the newly formed Commodity Credit Corporation began non-recourse, low interest, direct ***loans to farmers based on the value of their crops***, beginning with pork producers and followed by government purchase and removal from open markets of staples, butter, cheese and flour, redirected to relief distribution. As of 17 October 1933, by Executive Order #6340, along with these loans, "emergency payments" paid some producers of the 1933 crop to have them plowed under from funds reallocated from the budgets of

the previously enacted National Industrial Recovery Act and the Fourth Deficiency Appropriation Act respectively.

The Bankhead Cotton Act of 21 April and the Kerr Tobacco Act of 28 June 1934 both initiated marketing quotas by which tax exemption certificates and "payment warrants" could be used to offset taxation (established under the 1933 Adjustment Act) *on given crops. These taxes were deliberately structured high enough to make* unregulated production and marketing of targeted commodities fiscally unfeasible. Therefore anyone who chose to plant as large and any sort of crop he pleased instead of conforming his production and receiving subsidies would be penalized with prohibitive taxes on surpluses for which he had no warrant beyond the government allotment or could be paid non-taxable benefits for doing nothing. The choice was a no brainer.

Later, in 1934 and again in'35, so called *special draft funds* were created to expand relief distribution programs. These special drafts were new money in M-1, having no gold reserves to back them, no tax revenues to reimburse the expenditure; depending on the *future* sale of bonds to accommodate the deficit.

This we now call a *continuing resolution* to keep the government in business when it just runs out of money from the budget. This had the effect over time of inflating and devaluing the currency and reducing its buying power.

The government actually did a very successful massive public information program to drive home the precept entitled "Inflation is your friend" to encourage spending and *discourage* currency "hoarding" to get the money circulating again as the Congress ran deficits to turn the depressive tide around.

Section 32 of amendments, of 24 August, 1935, to the original enabling Agricultural Adjustment Act, unilaterally withdrew **30%** of all customs receipts for the purchase of surplus farm products for removal from free markets for redistribution through relief channels. Other provisions facilitated specific purchase of surpluses to reduce marketable supplies, the effect of which was meant to raise the consumer price index and other provisions for direct payments to farmers to subsidize their losses of income from not planting under their agreements with the government.

The only thing that had separated these social/ fiscal programs from pure fascism, which was very popular at the time in Europe, were the *provisions for*

referendums ***by producers*** voting to extend these programs from year to year after the first year of operation. **However,** these further amendments (of 24 August 1935 to the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933) authorized the *substitution of orders issued by the Secretary of Agriculture* ***with or without*** *marketing agreements or licenses.*

This meant that there were no longer referendums by farmers to control either production or marketing. The Government, by statute, circumvented the will of the citizenry to set mandatory quotas of farm production and exercised a virtual monopoly over the commerce of food and fibre to provide for the consumption of the American public.

Thus for six months the entire country was absolutely dependent on a nationally socialized, centrally government regulated agriculture profile; a fascist doctrine which was done away with in its entirety by the Supreme Court on June 6, 1936 with the Hoosick Mills Decision which established that all of the agricultural subsidy, appropriations and commensurate financing schemes under the enabling Agricultural Adjustment Act were unconstitutional on *civil rights grounds* pertaining to the provisions for taxation, exclusive of the other provisions, which was the *control function* of the entire scheme and so were struck down. Without this key component the policy construct could not function, effectively scrapping the policy entire. However for the first time ever a STATUTE had defined what parity was.

While it is important to realize that, though these programs did increase farm income by 1935 to half again what it was in 1932, about 25% of the increase was directly subsidized by the government without sufficient tax revenues to reimburse these expenditures devaluing the purchasing power for all, to buy food on the open market and inflating input costs to produce which were not equally regulated. And so, even as more actual money was made available to the farmer, his adjusted gain was little better than that reflected by the 1932 figures.

Concurrently, brokerages of commodities, that could buy in low and sell high, did very well as subsidy money just ran ***through*** the hands of the family farmers; many of whom were still sharecropping on lands defaulted after the over extension of credit from WW I, acquired by banks during the agricultural recession of the previous decade. Thus, *as an economic class*, the farmer's **equity** position never changed because there

wasn't enough profit reserve to contribute to outright purchase or debt service for acquisition on credit.

Another aspect, which few liberal economists are quick to point out, taxation on food made it one of the most expensive items on the average family budget. A consuming public, budgeting tightly to allow adequate food supplies, "made do" and traded with whatever they had, did not purchase newly made industrial goods, which would have generated new industrial production, provided jobs and personal incomes sufficient to have some expendable income to pay for inflated food prices. Squeezed from both ends, not enough money to buy food and the inflating cost of food, against every effort to regulate it, created indigents, removed from the consumer market and absolutely dependent on government relief programs just to eat.

" Is the light at the end of the tunnel a train?"

World War II created a profitable, "real" market for necessary agricultural production that actually supported in real dollars the true cost of production and, for the first time since the Armistice, provided enough reserve for family farmers to undertake *farm ownership loans*, which relaxed government credit policies under wartime conditions absolutely encouraged. The manipulation of new policy, which *now* recognized how badly the country needed their farmers, was affected on the *other* end of the economic spectrum, **rationing consumption, rather than limiting production,** to ensure surpluses for the war effort. This trend, factoring in a slight contraction at the conclusion of hostilities from WW II, continued through the end of the Korean conflict, 1954.

The national debt inherited from the Hoover administration by the Roosevelt administration was 15 billion dollars. When Mr. Roosevelt died in office in 1945, the national debt had risen to 265 billion.

"When you've got 'em by the balls, their hearts and minds will follow."

(or Alternative CED recommendation for absolute market control, ***airtight production control*** **was precluded** by S.Ct.; Hoosick Mills (1936) leaving the only alternative, investment holding, parity control, to drive farmers off the land.)

But another policy hybridization superceded. Stacked on the credit mess inherited from the First War, the principles of the outlawed farm policies of the new

deal, which were attempted to remedy a crisis that no longer existed, have had other consequences reaching into the present. The programs that superceded new deal programs were expanded welfare programs, direct subsidies to farmers in a *below parity* policy. From that, there has been a significant demographic shift of funding from subsidies directly to farmers on production to the other end of the spectrum, consumption. The subsidies here distribute across the spectrum of input industries, which accumulate to the "product". This means not only commodity production but in its effect subsidy of intermediaries, processors, packagers and the materials and value added they bring to the product, commission people who must be paid for their role in the commerce, transportation, storage; all are subsidized with essentially the same dollars which used to merely subsidize the individual producer. But the market prices are the same to worse while the subsidy portion to farmers is disproportionately reduced.

"Gee, if it's so great, why aren't *you* eating with us?"

Dr. Ivan Shields, a strong proponent of the CED continuing policy, first rolled out in 1946, was only to glad to trumpet the triumph of the policy (at a lecture at Glendale Community Collage called "Progressive Solutions to Agricultural Problems") in September of 1973 when he proclaimed that subsidies, *briefly* at that time, had all but been dispensed with. Yet he could not answer the question put to him by this reporter, if there were then no more subsidies, why had not that portion of the budget dedicated to subsidy also been reduced by that amount? It was pointed out that concurrently there had recently been announced another increase of an additional four million dollars in food stamp distribution along with expansions programs like in Aid to Dependent Children, school lunches and, so called then, "commodity" distribution programs to the indigent which encouraged consumption and shifted the leverage of government control through subsidies from the producer to the consumer which became more dependent on *market end* subsidies.

CED was at that time creating its update memorandum that said the 1946 plan was on track. About two million family farms failed after that experiment. They just couldn't pay their debts.

Again, in 1998-'99, the so called "Freedom to Farm Bill" wherein farmers were set free to plant what and as much of any crop without the safety net of government subsidy and without any adjustment to the price structure, was prognosticated to be "Freedom to Fail" by the nay-sayers; who were proven a year later to be correct. The squeeze, to date, took another million farm families out of production, sent them to town and left their farms for the corporates to divide up.

Nine million family farms were absorbed in this fashion in the last decade of the twentieth century.

Was this because, as CED suggested in 1947, the family farms couldn't keep apace technologically? No. In the winnowing process, the survivors had to stay current to even come close to competing.

Was the reason that given by the policy makers, that there wasn't enough return on investment to continue to dedicate so large a segment of the population to agricultural production? Well, not really if the corporates themselves saw some justification to invest with their profits in the production end of the profile if they could get in cheaply enough; which they did....because the policy made it possible to do so. Remember, *the parity level/ that portion of income dedicated to food was a whopping* twenty-four percent at the end of WWII. Free market Agriculture for family farmers **was profitable** when the policy was conceived.

"Where did da money go... eh, what's up, Doc?"

But a strange new phenomenon has taken place. The now multi-national/global commodity merchants have taken their capital offshore and profit from low labor and other input production advantages, such as lower standards for pesticide and herbicide use and fewer ecological regulatory concerns. They have become directly competitive to the domestic production base that profited them so to be in a capital control position to reinvest somewhere else. It is possible, under the current regime to have had it both ways.

American parent capital investment offshore disables American farmers in a vicious circle that *exports **subsidized** commodities* out of the country, profiting the global brokerages and also ***exports** American dollars* outside the country to capitalize an

ever-increasing ***import** of cheaply produced foreign food* in direct competition to the domestic producer in a price structure where they cannot independently compete.

This is profitable for these multi-national/global companies that used to be American, whose profits still derive from American workers consumption, subsidized by them through the revenues they will be obliged to pay to service the debt that subsidized food that was traded to reduce industrial trade surpluses but return little or nothing of substance back to the source of that wealth.

In spite of the fact that American farmers are producing more than any farmers have in the history of the world and are feeding a ratio of more people per farm producer than ever, the self sufficient infrastructure of American agriculture is becoming dismantled as its capital base leaves the country. And who will have paid for this? The American taxpayer. The American economy, through agriculture, is hemorrhaging money at an astounding rate. This is not wealth development; it is *wealth **transference**.* For the farmers, the faster they go the behinder they get.

"It's the policy, stupid!"

Returning for a moment to the Supreme Court Decision on Hoosick Mills (1936). It is important to point out that the reason for nullifying the policy to control production was that it was ***executed unilaterally**, out of the democratic and collective control of the producers, **reducing their menu of options to nothing**.* The ruling only applied to family farm producers, constituting all the elements of an ***ECONOMIC CLASS*** and which was deleterious to their economic survival and to the profitability of other segments of the economy.

When the CED, in 1946-'47, made its historical memorandum of recommendations for the removal of family farmers from the land by government programs, it gave as an either/or option **airtight control of production. But the framers of the policy already knew that this approach had already been effectively nullified by the Hoosick Mills case** of 1935-'36. Therefore, *airtight control of production* was a straw man alternative to persuade by deduction for the actual recommendation, government control of the price index and to use taxpayer revenues as, what amounted to, a holding company through which has transferred and consolidated capital wealth of the formerly dispersed and diversified owner operated

family farm capital investment base into other hands at expense of the taxpaying worker/consumers. There are similarities to the RTC debacle **and the losses were greater.**

However, *the same precept of denial of democratic process and civil rights, which distinguished Hoosick Mills, is what also distinguishes the same control on the other end of the economic spectrum;* ***unilateral*** *control through market (commodity) and price (sub-parity) manipulation.* We are all witness to the ever-increasing national debt, where a "cut" is actually a slowing of increase, which the Congress has chosen rather than to tighten the country's economic belt at the risk of blunting the growth and expansion of the economy with pesky little adjustments. The blueprint for this liberal experiment in economics began with the farm policies of the Roosevelt Administration of 1932.

Though those policies were effectively outlawed by the Supreme Court, *unilateral control*, the very prescription of abridgement of the civil rights of farmers as an ***economic class*** by unilateral government caveat has merely been shifted to the other end of the economic spectrum.

As before, subsidies have run **through** the hands of farm producers and the end product profitability has settled with those in control of the commerce. The missions have certainly changed because the needs changed with the advance of the twentieth century. But the fundamental processes have *not* changed and the objective is more pernicious. At least the Roosevelt Administration gave as its excuse the intention to attempt to help farmers. The new policy said specifically it meant to get rid of them. And **this was the policy that was actually written down over fifty years ago.** It was not a law but a *policy* from which statutes were crafted which unilaterally abridged a significant, recognized and defined ***class*** of the economic foundation of the country under the guise of "helping" them.

There was an old joke many years ago, in the midst of the cold war. In it the communist menace had prevailed in its domination of the world and the Commissars were merrily drinking vodka in the Kremlin and busy congratulating each other on their success; that is all except the Commissar of Agriculture who was off in a corner crying his eyes out. His friends tried to console him saying, "Why are you so distraught,

Comrade? We've beaten the capitalists; we've won, we've actually **won!"** "Yes, I know," he said", launching into a new round of howling emotion, "... but, now ***from where will we get wheat?"***

What, we may ask, would occur if the last of the privately owned, family farm producers were magically wiped away and the (now) subsidized commodity agribusinesses completely controlled the Agricultural production base? Would we (the nation) just cut a "check" to them directly out of tax revenues for the difference between their costs to produce the "cheap" food we consume and the shortfall to the consumption prices? That scenario is doubtful. When they *could* demand a return commensurate to the demand for their product, they **would** recover that; plus a substantial profit based on that demand scarcity. And, controlling the reserves, they will.

The CED memorandum of a half-century ago implied that the re-alignment of agricultural capital would produce great profitability. And so it *has* in the magnitude of multiple trillions of dollars of *corporate* commerce from *the expropriation* of only a trillion dollars of public debt, which is still owed at interest, and the loss of that figure (adjusted) offset of equities lost by family farmers during the century just passed. All of that is true. But in the principle of law, the fruit of an ill doing, an appropriation by false pretense let us say, is always forfeit. We certainly had to make an adjustment for the S&Ls (about a half trillion dollar), didn't we.... the people? Isn't it the people's money?

In 1936 (Hoosick, et al,supra), an entire **policy and all that came from it** was struck down because it did not follow the Constitutional prescription. It is worthwhile to note here because, the same government has used the same delay and avoidance tactics, which it decried of other non-government supplicants to "the law" during this long history. This government has repeatedly neglected the law, in both fact ***and*** spirit, to maintain *the policy* from which it holds itself immune from any accountability.

There are those who will say that no one could have conceived of such a huge thing. Yet those same detractors must readily acknowledge the reparations and apology, unresolved until **over fifty years** later, to Japanese-American citizens for their losses of estate equity while they stagnated in American internment camps during World War II at the hand of unilateral government policy. The same detractors cannot deny that these constructs, herein enumerated, executed by authorities who were very confident of their

ability, really *did* occur during the depression and that the princes of American commerce, very full of themselves, at the end of a Second War of the World over which they had just prevailed, thought that they had the answers for anything. But they forgot some fundamentals in their rush to wealth.

This government has ill-used its Justice and Agriculture Departments and the Judiciary, whose job it was to promote justice and equity and to increase public confidence, to have manipulated, then evaded and then blocked any challenge to the government's negligence, of members of an innocent class of productive citizens, who have always been the *first stewards* of the land, as they were systematically victimized. And the ***policy*** remains, ongoing.

Government must not only be active but *balanced*. It serves no one to be conserved on one end while being gouged on the other. Would that we, as a culture, assume that in future a burgeoning segment of small family farm producers ought subsidize with their off farm labor our cheap food and fiber as we have expected two generations of past farmers, with great courage and an undaunted sense of duty to the nation, to subsidize our inexpensive food and fiber with the sacrifice of their family's equities? They never quit until they *were driven* off the land, one by one by thousands of thousands. THAT was the policy.

At a time when there are other concerns that potentiate roles for agriculture such as our energy dependency, the search for alternative fuels and new conservation awareness, perhaps one answer, in a purportedly democratic Republic, is to embrace a truly free market, regionally distributional, highly diversified, self sufficient agriculture. Only that would require a significant strategic restructuring of the policy. To redistribute this consolidated equity to enhance ownership and personal wealth for a capital expenditure of unremarkable proportions to execute relative to the potential for return, needs the society undertake to recapture its **equity, prosperity** and **security** in agriculture that may again yield such a wealth for the new century in a new millennium? It is now an *international* debt *but a **national asset*** worth the recovery to get this country moving again.

However we may conclude that what exists now is neither a truly free market, nor necessarily a *fair* market, if it is at once a managed market. And it has been so for

eighty-five years. We do not know, in our collective memory, what the experience of a true free market agriculture, unfettered by ulterior motives and public subsidy, is like. What we do know is managed competition by a few special interest mega players who have come to dominate on a playing field weighted to them as long as living memory.

It is utter hypocrisy for us, the United States of America, as a purportedly free democracy, to profess to the world principles of free enterprise and free commerce in the rhetoric of *free trade* which we ourselves, in this most socialist endeavor, cannot find recourse to conceive, adhere to or effect.

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The Most Successful Agra-Marketing Ploy of the Twentieth Century

And It's Potential Impact on the Twenty-first

Morrison School of Agribusiness

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Article Summary

Publication: The Loss of Our Family Farms; Inevitable Results or Conscious Policies?

By whom; Mark Ritchie

When published; 1979

Mission to inform: the covert objectives of policies advocated by the CED/CID

Summary Overview of American Agriculture

1. (Historical) 1500-1900
2. The Golden Age, Recession, Depression, Sharecropping
3. From the Civil War to the Sixteenth Amendment
4. Impact of W.W.II to agri-commerce, (sub) Scientific method, Transportation, Statistical research (trending), Psy-ops (behavioral shaping), Capital expansion, Rationing, War bonds to E-bonds (or how do we pay for this stuff?)
5. 1940-'46 advent of CED/CID (define mission and origination)
6. 1946-2000 transfer of equity base from family farming to corporate investment.

Define "Policy" as marketing (terms) selling the idea

Objectives 1. To create agricultural stability- assurance of food and fiber (cold war)

2. To reduce the family farm population, increase corporate profitability, capital acquisition (Taxpayer expense).

Marketing Strategy of CED/CID, duel messages

Target mkt.- need met= cheap food- gen. Population/ govt.

Beneficiaries (winner's govt., commodity brokerages (costs kept artificially low)

Losers- farmers default by lower than parity farm commodity pricing (define parity 1939)

Value of one of six trillion $ of national debt capitol asset value transferred to other hands

Long-term effects for the twenty-first century

Implied… globalization has presented investment sources and market distribution channels, which are no longer as controllable, by the traditional "American" brokerages, which predominated during the cold war.

What factors will change?

1. Water quality to assure ag production worldwide may reduce production capacity
2. Capital resource shift to offshore
3. Control of market share of commodities shift
4. Economic collapse Credit failure/bond (public) debt. Note comparison on 1929 depression, not lack of expertise but of economic diversity (private debt) and overextension (recession) that did in the farmers.
5. Unintended consequences: if the system was designed to capture equity in the United States from a family owned industry, defray the cost by shifting to the taxpayers, the outcome is that the markets have outpaced the original concept and, while well postured, American based international commodity brokerages may not keep control from the developing capital competition worldwide.
6. Good faith does not abide for American superiority versus local identity.

KEY POINTS AND CONCLUSION; Policies upon which mkt. assumptions and marketing decisions of the latter half of the twentieth century were predicated, were based on experience of the first half of the century. These variables will not apply, changing dramatically in the next century.

Summary Overview of American Agriculture

1. The function of primitive agriculture was, first and foremost, the preservation of the community (society) after which it became possible to trade excesses, crafts or art or new technologies. These non-agricultural production adjuncts developed into industries and commerce exclusively apart from the production of food, which divided and multiplied the labor of the society, extending tribal quality of life, acceleration of new technological discovery and spheres of influence relative to the wealth of the community as against other communities.

The function of modern agriculture is, at its apex, preservation of the community (society) after which it is possible to trade excesses, crafts, art or new technologies. These non-agricultural production adjuncts have developed into industries and commerce exclusively apart from the production of food, which divide and multiply the labor of our society, extending **our** *tribal* quality of life, acceleration of new technological discovery and spheres of influence.

The Colonial period, from roughly A.D. 1500 to the American War of Independence, was a period of exponential development in transportation technology, agricultural production and the push by a feudal olde world for new wealth from a new world. The capitalization of this venture involved long logistic lines and the necessity to establish self-sufficient regimes in the new territories. Agriculture, indentured to a feudal (corporate) economy far removed, was the cornerstone of these colonial ventures and, later, non-perishable commodities constituted part of the return on the colonial investment and eventually created new ownership and nauvou rich wealth independent of the original capital sources.

The same formula of agricultural expansion to facilitate new growth, economic and geographic expansion applied to the westward movement of the post Revolutionary experience with particularly relatively rapid advances in botany and what we now know as agronomy and genetics. The onset of the Industrial Revolution added new applications of mechanical technology to the formula, reducing the amount of labor output necessitated to produce increased yields to match a burgeoning demand.

Particularly after 1800 the notion of human labour was increasingly offset by the application of laborsaving processes in production, manufacturing, transportation,

navigation, etcetera, that also lowered costs to produce and increased profitability on the increased yield, which remained under steady demand, which freed ever more people to pursue other non-farm activities.

However the majority of the American population still resided in rural America when there were perceived good times; security, autonomy, familiarity, family, a common societal recognition of the value of agriculture to the whole society, regional markets and relatively protected low investment cost of the principle element, land.

2. The Golden Age of Agriculture is considered to be from 1895 to 1920. This was the period of apogee when all the elements assembled to give an independently capitalized agrarian population the best possible balance of economic control, low costs to produce relative to return, highest profitability directly to the family farm producer, popular sovereignty, the national grange movement which effectively lobbied to protect the family farmers position and local and national government which translated that popular majority will to political reality without much resistance from the non-farm sector.

However with the advent of World War One, when Europe was embroiled in a contest, which had all but neutralized its agricultural base, the demand for American produce skyrocketed to feed and support European populations and armies afield. So too did the value of farmland and the pace of expansion to accommodate the new *international* markets. The banking system was willing to extend substantial long-term credit on the expectation of this continued commerce. But this proved a fallacy as the United States entered the war and prematurely brought the hostilities to a close at least two years before it had been expected.

Overextended farmers were caught by surprise as, within months of the Armistice in November of 1919, both government and overseas contracts waned as Europe got its battlefields back into agricultural production and the necessity and demand of inflated government contracts ceased.

American agriculture was in recession for nine years *before* the Great Depression of 1929. Millions of small farms went into receivership. The banks, caught short without a cash flow and realizing they were bankers not farmers were in many instances willing to either renegotiate loans if there was value proven or more often

allow former owner operators to stay on the farm and sharecrop it, splitting the profits from the sale of produce with the bank to recover some return on the wartime investment.

It is important to note, though, that the population was not significantly dispossessed until after the Depression of 1929 forced the liquidation of many of those small farms and subsequent consolidation into larger tracts awaiting an economic and policy change. During the lean years of the depression when unemployed people accounted for only thirty percent of the population of about one hundred thirty million, government programs to assist and support the hungry and dispossessed of these accounted for only two thirds of that need. The remaining (gross) ten percent, mainly drawn from rural America, made do either sharecropping, "squatting" on appropriated lands, which for the time had no other administrative use, or were in constant movement back and forth across the land living in shanty towns and hobo jungles, hopping freights to the next rumor of work because the land to which they had been tied and the source of their former security and identity was, along with that life, gone; gone forever.

1. The revenue systems of choice to defray the costs of government administration from the inception of the country until the American Civil War were tariffs on goods in commerce and property taxation. But the Civil War threatened to bankrupt the treasury if another source of revenue enhancement were not discovered. This source was a national income tax, legislatively enacted only to repay war debt and expressly sun-setted by the statute when the debt was paid, which was 1875.

But the bankers and bond houses never forgot how much interest they made on that credit and lobbied aggressively for the next three and a half decades for its re-establishment. Until 1913 the several administrations from either major party resisted the urge to tax but with the trend for far reaching responsibilities beyond our shores and the potential for war in Europe looming not far in the distance, President Woodrow Wilson bowed to the pressure and acceded to the move to create a national income tax. But it is important to note that the special interests who wanted it, wanted it in the form of a permanent *Constitutional amendment*, not just a revocable or sunset statute and not tied to any specific obligation to repay. Though the same proposal was *not* voted on by the number of states necessary to ratify it, nevertheless the Secretary of State wrote a

memorandum that it had indeed passed and on the strength of that it became accepted as though law. Wilson in his memoirs decried his action but by that time had had a stroke and was totally out of any position to do anything to correct it.

With this funding it was possible for powerful interests to realistically perceive and plan for monumental and historical constructs beyond anyone's imagining before the turn of that century.

2. The impact of World War II on agricultural commerce cannot be emphasized enough. The application of the ***scientific method***; systematic, goal oriented ***management by objective*** to every profile of industry, including agricultural production, combined with planning for seamless ***logistical*** distribution on the practical end, never applied so before the second great war, satisfied new demands for cost containment and efficiency while new disciplines in ***statistical research*** and ***behavioral modification*** (psychological warfare) had applications in the corporate scheme in marketing. These kinds of considerations, which had previously been executed instinctively but imprecisely were now matters to be studied, catalogued and applied in new ways to make a profit by an enlightened corporate America.

The Depression had necessitated a whole new creative thinking about ***capital expansion*** and ***rationing*** had proven that a whole population could be managed by public awareness and behavioral modification. Without these elements and war bonds to raise financing for the war effort, sold to the general population on the promise of return on their investment after the war, morphed into *savings* bonds in time of peace after, added to the open ended selling of government securities (treasury bills and Federal Reserve Bonds) and a ***nonspecific revenue base*** from income taxation, what transpired next could never have occurred.

3. The **Committee on Economic Development** was originally one of President Franklin Roosevelt's unofficial think tanks made up of respected business people and academics of the time to try out hypothetical ideas to get the economy restarted in the Depression and later drawn upon for ideas to enhance the war effort. CED had become funded as an official entity in 1942 to prognosticate on the economic situation during and after the war's conclusion. Out of the CED, by Roosevelt's death in 1945, emerged the **Committee on International Development** drawing from the same

pool of internationalists, academics and corporate business minds to propagate ideas for the post war commerce policy of the world. These factions now had a statutorily secured quasi-governmental, public-private structure evolving "missions" purported to assist other countries emerging from the wreck of WWII and were decisive in the planning that led to treaties that laid out the new rules for commerce in a new world, such as the Breton-Woods accords in 1946. Almost immediately after the war, there was a recognition that the new world would be philosophically divided and the contest for world domination was couched in the familiar lexicon of the "hot" war, which had just preceded. Thus it was in a speech in Springfield Missouri in 1946 that Winston Churchill coined the phrase, which set the agenda for the next forty-five years, the "Cold War". The upside of the cold war was a continuation of inordinately high public expenditure for defense, which promoted economic growth but continued the trend of deficit spending and national indebtedness.

Privately the CID and CED worked to create a set of policies which would bring about a dominion by the good side, our side, which would safely lay all the commerce of the world in the hands of an educated and economic elite, academicians and corporate business leaders, from whose ranks they drew another term and eventually was meant to acquire great power and reward from an elitist based stewardship, a "New World Order". This body of circumstances presented an opportunity to conserve economics of scale in agricultural production implemented to shift economic resources to finance priority areas of investment and contain costs. At the close of WW II, the parity level for food and fibre constituted 24% of household expenditure, the highest it had ever been in the history of the country.

4. Based upon the record of the intentions of the CED and CID from 1946 forward to the present, it is possible to authenticate what their truer objectives were with regard to specific agricultural policy and infer in hindsight why it was germane to the larger geo-political objectives of the time. The purpose of the CED/CID was economic control of the agronomic base in America to increase ***corporate profitability*** and ultimately the ***transfer of the capital base*** formerly democratically held in collective hands of family owned and operated agricultural producers to be delivered into the hand of a new autocratic corporate invested construct at the cost of the taxpayers who would

be the unwitting benefactors but while appealing at once to the general populace, carefully segmented and characterized as ***beneficiaries*** of a purported "cheap food policy".

Policy Defined

It is at this point essential to comprehend the opposed definitions and function of "policy" from the standpoint of its colloquial use and it's application by these policy-making entities. *Policy may be the **reactive** erection of an operant process from a legislative command*, as that a policy shall derive from a statute which compels an activity or remediation to be executed by the office of the *Execu*tive branch of government, the effects about which there are constraints against inaction or action excessive to the (Congressional) will and spirit of the statutory command. There is potential for legislative oversight and corrective intervention to restrain abuse.

The inverse of this definition of policy is to erect a ***proactive*** sequence of activity either circumventing established lawful will or anticipating legislative potentialities and intervening to entrench a particular outcome to the exclusion of other option/s which purpose may only then become evident in hindsight.

Marketing is selling, a product or service, an idea or a system of ideas. ***To no small degree, a function of marketing is precisely to anticipate needs and find a means to satisfy those needs to "consumers" and to accommodate the objectives of the organization***. *Profit* may not always express itself in expressly monetary terms. There may be intermediary and non-monetary gains to be necessarily effected before traditional profits accrue. (Profit considerations @ p.9)

Objectives

Therefore it is necessary to state the primary objectives, obvious and less obvious, of the subject of this discourse.

1. To create agricultural stability, assurance of availability of food and fibre during the period of the cold war.

a. Satisfy actual consumers of cheap food

b. Capture/ control Market; both at purchase and sale.

c. Control international commerce in commodities through acquisition/ targeted capitalization; making food a strategic asset resource in the balance of power in the world, to deprive by embargo or to assist as foreign aid.

2. To reduce the family farm population by enforcement of government regulation to execute the larger policy objective; to increase corporate profitability and, with the profits, acquisition of the production capital base at taxpayer expense by recapitalizing farms with public revenues and then depress their valuation for acquisition, the loss differential to be absorbed by the public debt. (Quote on airtight control of price of commodities)

Marketing Strategy and the Target Market

There was a duel message in the creation of this policy package, one message for each of the targets. The first was the consumers themselves and the message was the assurance that there would be adequate food and fibre for their consumption at price levels agreeable to them. It was a passive strategy allowed to soak in as an inference the general public could draw for itself over time. Consumers liked the inexpensive food and clothing, unaware of the hidden costs.

The other message was for the regulatory policy makers, legislators and regulators who would draft the enabling legislation and the offices of the executive; succeeding Chief Executives (the President) and Secretaries of Agriculture whose job it would be to execute the policy; whether or not they even comprehended the end game. The hard target was anyone who might show the least resistance about the efficacy of the policies which parts were so convoluted as to be almost incomprehensible without significant study and dedication. For the rest, the special interests that made them look good guided them to acceptance of the new status quo; cheap food for their constituencies, great profitability for the intermediaries, generous corporate re-election campaign donations and perks from appreciative firms, both agricultural and not, and the appearance to the rural community of sympathy for bringing home new funding for programs to "help" farm families.

And finally, there had to be a third message for the family farmers themselves. That message was, "If you'll go along with this, we'll guarantee to make up the shortfall

with packages of subsidies and debt relief." Most of that message was conveyed in the form of new re-amortized loans at low interest to keep them going until it was time for their assets to be absorbed. It was like gambling every year in Las Vegas where a few players win big, some break-even and the rest go home in a bus. The system was rigged so the house always wins. And it was a completely artificial construct.

The Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933, for the first time, *statutorily* defined ***Parity***, the baseline *cost/pricing structure* necessary to recover to create a floor for sale of farm commodities to stay in business. By exercising a policy of *below parity pricing*, influencing the market by heavy capital infusion into the futures markets to tie up farm resources to set the base for the next years harvest and manipulation of the spot prices on the board by dumping surpluses into the market deliberately depressed the floor making farmers vulnerable to require new capital assistance to continue. Once dedicated to primary government or government guaranteed loans it was like going back to the casino to get another marker to go back to the tables to play until the loan portfolio exceeded the indentured value of the farm asset. After that the regulatory chain in place simply would fall like so many dominoes.

No non-farm industry in existence would consider such terms, such indenture of its assets or such complete outside control of its operations as farm producers were willing to accept to stay farming. The money only moved *through* their hands to profit others. But where did their assets go?

Winners and Losers

Who were the beneficiaries of this policy? Certainly the monetary winners include commodity brokerages benefited from low buy in costs and a market structure spread sufficiently with plenty of economic reserve to insure a profit on the sale of their low cost acquired commodities. And in the last quarter century these heavily cross invested portfolios have acquired a significant part of the production base at fire sale prices liquidated to them by the Agriculture Department out of surplus properties from repossession of the former family farmer owner operators. The volume of these transactions, as an identifiable class, exceeds the Savings and Loan debacle, as an identifiable class, for transfer of assets though over a much more protracted period.

Other monetary winners were the entire expanded profile of intermediary businesses, input (to production) industries, chemicals (more), heavy industrial (Bigger and bigger equipments) and banking, which garnered interest at low to no risk. Other businesses on the back end of the farmer, processors, packagers, transportation, construction, materials, recyclers, and brokerages that proliferated during this period which did not exist before when the same multi-functions were handled in shorter chains of commerce in regional economies by a smaller army of middlemen and the producers themselves. As their shares grew, the producer's share dwindled on an artificially reduced base.

Among the losers obviously were the family farmers. Less obvious though is the cost to the general population. Of about six trillion dollars of gross national debt, which is in process of being reduced **(at this writing, subsequently increased)* about one trillion is the accrual of funding dedicated in the last half century to agriculture. This includes everything from loans, debt restructuring, debt reduction, subsidies, set asides, easements and experimental programs to grants, food stamps and public assistance to farm families, right down to suicide prevention and family counseling in the only country in the world that gives public assistance to feed farmers who grow the food but would prosecute them for theft by conversion if they eat any of it.

The continuing resolutions which permitted the sale of securities by which the government has operated beyond its revenue, raised moneys to fund ongoing policy objectives including this, which is here generally outlined. Those moneys were dispensed in each of the fiscal years and the deficits into which they fell were rolled over the following year to the national debt, which the nation services at interest. Thus the actual parity shortfall was never paid for and remains on the books of the nation for which each and all taxpayers pay to service that debt. *It constitutes the greatest unpaid grocery bill in the history of mankind.*

We know upon what the money was spent. And we know that the parties who were meant to be the original beneficiaries of those programs, family farm producers, are no longer there. We know that those assets still exist but in the hands of others who were not the originally intended recipients. And we know that those third parties will not be held liable for the original debt for the assets that they have acquired. Therefore,

it is the people, the consumers who will continue to pay. They are, in a sense, winners of inexpensive food and fibre on the front end and the technologies that have manifested, partially capitalized by this shift of capital resource. *But there is still an outstanding bill to come due.* **Perhaps this deferred debt will fall on the gen- x or gen-y.**

Long-term effects for the twenty-first century

In the macro-economic picture, the family farm producers contributed their lives and energies and no small amount of emotional pain to the well being of the nation and of the economy. But they did not retain equity commensurate to any other segment on adjusted terms and to which a truly free market would have given them their due. They are essentially gone now and an impersonal corporate monolith has replaced them with a completely reformed profile.

Subsequent CED memorandums in 1962 and 1974 defended the policy and noted that the policy was proceeding on track, further indicating intent.

John Maynard. Keynes wrote the definitive treatise on economics upon which the twentieth century policies were founded. It said that governments may entertain deficits in times of economic downturn or national crisis *but must be paid back during the cycle of wealth to follow. The way this theory was popularly interpreted only recognized the first half of that.* But when the very zenith of economic expectation has been attained, the greatest wealth machine the world has ever known, there is no mention of a new policy shift to recompense independent farmers whose equities were contributed to this wealth or recognition of their prowess to have produced endlessly under the most daunting of authoritarian impositions. They are, in the end, only said to have failed and there is no pressing ancillary cause to impel a new policy to reestablish family farming. If it is a choice, it is not to the profit mongers an option they would care to contemplate because it would divert the economic resource flow back the other way at the expense to venture preferences that their philosophy has spent a half-century to establish.

It would take a marketing genius to convince an entrenched policy body that a better way exists or an economic disaster of such proportion, as a world war or a depression, to compel that body to relinquish its death grip on agriculture production equity only as a compromise to save its other equities.

A circular logic exists here. If, as CED said, investment (economic and human resources) *does indeed not return as much as it would re-invested in other industry*, then why would they want it? The answer they gave for public consumption, couched in the emotional rhetoric of a cold war that has passed, was our sense of security, our happiness and our duty. No such intangible asset as these has a measurable value. When all those causes are swept away, there remains only greed. Only an undemocratic control of resources can accommodate greed which intern must deprive someone of whatever it covets; no matter the cost in treasure, anguish, fear or blood. Someone will pay. There is no free lunch. *And there is no free market.*

With cyclic contraction of expendable income, the marketing mix will change with shifts in demand. Actual cost in agricultural production may increase marginally in scale with the rest of the economy but *control of the cost structure will reside with* vertically integrated corporations and what the consumer market can bear will be the primary criterion for pricing. Product lines are already streamlining to the lowest common denominator.

American marketing acumen will prevail for one generation as it is acquired by other cultures in the shift to new controls and spheres of economic influence. But too, technology will automate away many intermediary functions and they will fade into pro-forma constructs, which make employees merely placeholders performing prescribed tasks to sustain corporate profitability.

However, no managed regime can last indefinitely, though perhaps the better managed last a little longer. New subterranean and regional economies will emerge as the cycle swings back the other way, back to basics.

Since food and water will be in increasingly short supply worldwide, the breadbaskets will be potentially contested geo-politically and multinationals will demand and get police intervention to protect their assets and profits.

The clever marketing specialist may make good personal use of these conditions to insure his personal security but the map of commerce will be redrawn along lines of economic interest and control which must necessarily drive price up with demand as control of the supply lays with the marketers.

There will be haves and have nots; a world of privileges predicated on economic standing but not rights as we know them because the principles of egalitarian democracy are a minority view in the world where the illusion of power is in the balance. World democratization will last about thirty years but that regime will decay as new hubs of economic power arise and old ones fall away.

The Corporate mantra always promises much, but demands much while it gives little and production agriculture has always been the stepchild of corporate commerce.

The world economy will reach apogee and then shrink. Corporate America has succeeded in its endgame to have it all, to control it all in the cold war but the motives for those objectives, other than greed and pure vanity no longer exist. The now corporatized American investment driven production base is being diluted by inflows of "multinational" foreign capitol and as marketing tradition and knowledge are adopted by overseas entities whose cultural aspirations and political motives are different and whose motives have a culturally biased end game, the balance of economic power will change too.

American (bond) debt is held by offshore investments and whether or not the American people redeem that debt, the production base itself, the farms, are only corporate assets now to be traded in a world market and title will never go back to American family farmers who were tied generationally and traditionally to the land.

Control will thus pass to non-American hands to be used for their purposes but no longer retained in America's sphere of influence to be used as a strategic asset. The loss of that equity and its prerogatives will contribute to neutralize American influence abroad over time, no matter how benevolent or altruistic it may have been purported to be intended. We may only hope that the Democratic/humanitarian rationale has actually taken root.

In closing, the author would share a poignant remembrance from a long ago time, which has a ghostly relevance to our own. A great Lakota Chief named Red Cloud was interviewed in his declining years about his role in the history of the Indian Wars of the westward expansion to which he replied, **"When the white men came, they made many promises, so many that most I do not remember. But I do remember one. They said they would take our land… and they took it".**

"Chapter Two"

The Cure

Stapleton, 16 April '01

Having enumerated the history and the problem in the working papers that constitute Chapter One, we may summarize the postulate and then propose a point of beginning to a solution.

The end result of the particulars introduced in the first section will be a fundamentally unstable and eventually unreliable production of food and fiber based not on the ability or capacity of agricultural producers to accomplish the task but economic imperatives over which they have no control which have separated the physical plant of production from the people best qualified to micro-administer it. The destiny of farm equities has been surreptitiously transferred into the hands of a relatively small controlling investment contingent which has control of the commerce, disconnected from the material input processes that facilitate the capacity to produce the actual commodities that are the source of that commerce.

A subsidy dependent commodity commerce system is not by its nature a freely independent, self-sufficient entity which parts would be predicted to adjust in what I shall describe as a biologic model rather than a top down policy driven model that is wholly dependent on a long train of prediction to the end "product" of profitability. In fact this prescription was predicated on the proposition that self-sufficient producers should be spirited out of their pursuit by a process of deliberate **disincentive,** government intervention and *made* to be a welfare sector. No one consulted them.

Therefore we may deduce that the problem is one of equity/ resource allocation, not technical insufficiency.

For the profile of American agriculture to be restructured in a more traditional, pre-corporate, diversified manner, would require a significant reinvestment of the national wealth, that was extracted, reappropriated and reinvested *from* the equities of farmers, back into equity building in a farm owner-operator format. This entails a shift back from capitalization of inputs, which constitute the majority of the capital

investment in the product prepared for sale, *currently decreasing* the minority share for the producer in a deliberately policy driven construct which forces the market for the commodity to remain below parity or break-even for recovery of the costs to produce it.

Since this shortfall has been wholly financed from revenues extracted from the public and public debt for which the people remain liable at interest, it is in the public interest to reduce this long-term expenditure and the interest that bears with this cost but necessitates at once a reinvestment under a new regime.

The mission enumerated by the enabling Act of 1862-63 that precipitated this huge bureaucratic gambit was expressly meant to investigate all *technologies, **not** policies*, that would increase efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the family farm producer to increase his net income and insure his sustainable competitive advantage long term, insure for adequate food and fibre for a growing population and to *enhance equity holding and reduce vulnerability to the vagaries of dependence on outside investment.* What *has* occurred is exactly opposite that intention.

This mission has been completely inverted, potentiating all the ills that the Congressional fathers of this body of statutory good intent said they wanted to avoid. Instead succeeding policy impositions have fostered a confiscatory and predatory bureaucracy that has systematically deprived the intended class of beneficiaries, that contribute to the well-being of the society, of a stable operational environment and handed their equities and life estates over to others, minimally invested, whose returns do not depend on the specific output of the production base but on the manipulation of the market in commerce.

We must advocate a rededication to fundamental principles which seek to preserve the sustainable production base in the hands of a highly diversified and, to the extent possible, self sufficient body of producers who can rely on expectation of a reasonable return on investment in a free market commerce relative to the good work they do compared to the non-farm sector.

This also requires specifically targeted reconfiguration of the market channels back into regional distribution where reasonable.

Merely throwing money at the problem has been unsatisfactory. Rethinking about the layers of special interests who have crafted these draconian constructs and the subsequent removal of these statutory impediments to a free market is only a first step.

There is a prevailing culture that is deeply committed to its own preservation in the vastness of the United States Department of Agriculture, particularly the Farm Services Administration, which must be redirected to a new clear mission to facilitate family farming and away from the corporate model. This entails a significant redefinition of the task structure, probable reductions in force of a severely bloated bureaucracy consistent with the new scale of work, work that is geared to merit, tied to the successful outcome of the objective to preserve and expand the family farm base in this transition. The surplus human resource allocation should be excellently qualified to assist the private sector, we trust. The bureaucratic work product currently has no practical connection to the sector it administers. Let the personnel whose labours have been dedicated to the profitability of the commodity traders be paid for and supported *by them*. Return the remaining, rededicated personnel to the field; get them out of their climate-controlled offices and back in contact with their real constituency, farmers. Give credibility to farmer complaints about services *and* favorable input *from* farmers. Don't **dictate to** them what they need based on an abstract of corporate profitability expectations; **ask** *them* what *they* need. They know better than anyone because they are closest to the requirements of the work.

Political considerations are not without merit, for as the Congress speaks in its hypocrisy about "helping" the poor downtrodden family farmer, they, as a body, are well invested in the special interest corporate culture that can afford to expend a portion of it profits to lobby and support campaigns, derived in part from ***profitability insured by the subsidy of commodities*** (to the farmers from whom they obtain their commodities) with monies ***obtained from the taxpayers.*** It is a vicious circle. Add to this that our elected officials are generally comfortably well to do, well invested in their personal diversified economic portfolios, a part of which would be expected to include a dilution of investments in "stable" commodity investment blocks which are invariably part of highly diversified investment programs of which they, while a part, may not even be commonly aware, remote and plausibly deniable if the question were even to be

brought. Altruism is not alone sufficient cause to insure voluntary compliance where ***profitability*** is supported by such internecine and co-dependent strategy ***dependent on subsidies*** that they only insure with their several continuing resolutions and new, complex Agriculture Bills. The Congress only helps propagate the continuing vicious circle and profits from its manipulation. This makes its own interests in this process of reciprocation "special" and ought be construed a cumulative conflict of interest against the American people.

There is a certain parallel about to present on the legislative front, which for its similarity is worth making the metaphor.

There is a significant discussion occurring at the present in the Congress about the escalated costs of pharmaceuticals and the hardships these costs bring to fixed income, primarily older citizens. While some of the costs are absorbed by Medicare or Medicaid, the steeply rising index on this commerce has escalated the co-pay portions that the consumer must make up, often, according to recent testimony, eating into budgets for other necessities like *food*. These are tough choices for people who have no power to amend their situation or the market that has them trapped. A sympathetic Legislative, for the most humanitarian cause, says it wants to alleviate this suffering; no doubt equally well invested both directly and indirectly beneficiaries of the outcome as in agriculture.

Pharmaceutical corporations say that their pricing structures are designed to recoup the astronomical costs of research and development, including years of mandatory trials and a complex regulatory and certification process for the safety of the consumer.

Even as this proposition is being floated in the Congress for the government to take up the difference with taxpayer dollars, the pharmaceutical companies have posted their first quarter earnings and glowing reports that their profitability is the highest it has been in a decade. At the same time it has been separately reported that these same corporations, almost all international, dump their excesses on foreign markets at far lower prices, sometimes below cost.

A monopoly of cooperation exists between the "good competitors" in this industry who have carved out their delineated markets and demand is stable to increasing.

The same could be said of the major commodity investment groups. Demand is stable, their market channels and niches are well established and they control the price they will pay for their raw materials based on a predictable return from sale, either as an intermediary or a finished product. However the market they have created has itself stagnated to a point that margins of profitability are generally no greater than two or three percent on a huge capital value. The returns are blue chip, like utilities, considered low risk, safe investments but as a consequence, small on return

In either case, should the taxpayers' revenue be subsidizing and insuring their respective profitability; especially when their products are a captured market with a never-ending demand? It would seem that the purpose for this exercise is less to insure the survivability of these industries than just to enhance their bottom lines at the citizens' expense, *the differential of which would be dead losses but for the subsidies garnered from public investment in production agriculture*

Medicare, a part of Social Security, is known to be a steadily dwindling resource headed toward a vanishing point in the next twenty to twenty five years, adjusted only by the velocity at which it may be expended against what measures to conserve it can be brought to bear.

However our domestic agricultural production base, part of the fundamental infrastructure of the country, is a longer-lived and more complex problem since it is *already* a deficit expenditure, *debt at interest*, which constitutes part of the gross national debt that must eventually be repaid. That infrastructure, a converted asset which has been gambled on the alter of corporate commerce to make a profit, needs to be reestablished to sustain the prosperity and the security of the nation through a new millennium in which there will be many other demands.

It has become a comfortable thing in our culture to expect inexpensive food, readily available in endless abundance. But the price of food and fiber to the American consumer at purchase is not the true cost. Quietly, out of sight, it has come at an accumulation of cost, a promissory note that has yet to come to demand. The day will

come when such a demand will present and, without an early intervention to dissuade it, may be devastating.

This reporter once had an interface with a gentleman from China and we talked at length about agriculture in our two countries. He was amazed at the array of foods available in our markets and the degree of sophistication of the distribution system. But when I asked him about how the Chinese feed a billion people, he said they needed to find new technologies to reinvigorate the land. He said to me "our land is like an old coat. It was once warm in winter but over the centuries it has become threadbare, just warn out."

I never forgot that talk. Farming is micro mining using the medium of biologic mass to extract and convert minerals and solar energy into consumables that have value to make a profit. But every ton of biologic mass that is transported out of a field is material converted *from* that field. Our prairies have been harvested for over a hundred years and the regeneration has not kept pace with the withdrawal. Artificial means are being supplemented increasingly year by year. Only five percent of our prairie breadbasket remains in anywhere near its' pristine condition and the other ninety five percent is in trouble from which some estimates predict it could take another hundred years to repair. Our coat is getting old very fast.

Corporate farming does not work because the fundamentals of its' assumptions and expectations do not work. Pure business uses a resource until it is gone and then invests its profits somewhere else. The function of PURE BUSINESS is to maximize profit, not to give that profit away to refurbish after the fact.

Family farming is dedicated to preservation of the resource for next year and the next generation. That is not what is occurring in American Agriculture and has not for several generations.

A new system will take its place, predicated by a new recognition that the way we think of as "traditional" is really just *transitional* and that long-term sustainability, which should always have been the guiding mantra of agriculture will ultimately be the only choice left. There are already emerging trends in no-til(lage) systems and an emerging recognition that rural lands have perhaps a greater social role than just

profitability from the produce of the soil, assets such as carbon emission absorption from industry and the function of filtration of water. There is increasing appreciation too about the liabilities of pesticide and insecticide residue and environmental contamination from concentrated livestock operations. All these tend to follow the corporate formula for high concentration, high yield, high profit, low cost mass production. The hyper production is technically doable, yes, but at costs which are deferred long after the profit taking and perhaps long after the corporate entity that made those profits has gone on or morphed into something else.

As ever "the people" are left holding the bag to make repair or live with the consequences.

There will be contraction and a shift in emphasis and values and all that implies, lifestyle conservation, living with less. We can make those choices now or wait for them to be forced upon us. Isn't ***that*** a choice?

A Post Script: 3 October 2003

I am a fan of Thomas Paine, John Locke and de Toqueville. When I composed this document, it was with the hope that there might prevail some sense of reason that said simply that we have to do what we do differently because what we speculatively did before didn't work out the way our assumptions predicted. But that has not occurred. On the contrary, we have gone far the other way. That hopefulness was predicated upon simplistic thinking on my part, for which I apologize now to the reader.

We have now spent *another* half trillion dollars of the people's future labor and means, to make war and to rebuild the infrastructures of *other* nations, even before we consider the rebuilding of our own; even as other trading blocks, the European Union, the Pacific Rim, the Middle East and China solidify their economic forces and their infrastructures to become self sufficient and powerful, based, curiously enough, on a model created from our nation and funded, no less ironically, from our nations coffers and labour. This has occurred while many of them have openly advocated the eventual fall of our Republic to make room for their respective ideologies in a redistribution of wealth and power in the world. This has to be stupidity compounded.

We are no longer a free people if our only value is as labour resource units, without any practical control of the means or the outcome of our collective destiny, to be mined for the profit of great visionaries in their own interest. And that is so in the reality of today.

The two political parties that dominated the twentieth century, *"the American Century"*, in our nation, in the end morphed into one vision and one track of thinking that was at its core socialistic, nationalistic and egocentrically dominated from the top down, predicated on the consolidation of power in the state rather than its distribution throughout the society, which was the first fear of the founders that they intended to thwart; designed to profit the few today at the deferred cost to the many. That the cost will be great is also a feature in the reality of our future.

Oh, I've heard the academics say again and again, "oh, it's just market forces at work…." **But remember that all the elements that comport to have created today's "market forces" occurred in a very limited format that was created in a vacuum, exclusive of the consensus of the general peoples who might have forbidden it if they had considered the consequences. Somebody thought out every next step, at each step narrowing the consensus but widening its impact on the coffers of the people, taking it to the next level because they could profit on it; farther and farther away from the Revolutionary ideal of the American founders that the elected were intrinsically implied to protect.**

Mr. Jefferson, Mr. Franklin and all the others thought of technology as a means to an end, not an end unto itself. They defined money, prosperity and security in much the same way, as both the means and a product but exemplar of this *other* ethereal ideal of personal freedom that is as fragile and vulnerable as dust on a tabletop. Yet in almost every facet of modern life that you can imagine, the principle message in marketing for a new world is **fear**…of some future insecurity, homelessness, illness or the "great terror" that, we are told, can take it all away *if we do not conform*. The **Constitutional contract, that the founders *wrote* down,** for all their posterity to be able to reference if they weren't absolutely certain of their rights and protections under law, have been circumscribed by a series of exceptions that leave the mighty virtually untouchable but

increasingly leave all the rest in fear. And that is a message that the powerful only trade upon.

Our Republic, born of great and positive hope, has become a nation in the negative; not just of our debt but of our soul. And our detractors, like sharks in the water, can smell the blood. For it is also true that the elected are no longer elected by the consensus of the electorate as much *for* the one candidate as *against* the other and by that the winner is by default from the one who loses first.

And according to the *rest* of that negative message, there is nothing one can do for themselves but turn it over to some authority who, in control of our collective might, can save us from all that.

Is not ours a nation of law…of…carefully crafted exceptions?…Well, Zeig Hiel! Is all this familiar? It is *that* very message for which the founders separated from England to begin with; before we might have fallen further into the pit of a bondage from which we might not have been timely enabled to extricate ourselves.

Will Rogers, with humor, likened this phenomenon to a "great" combine (*combine: a piece of machinery that both swaths and threshes; a very common term in the farmers lexicon)*, where, he said, material goes in one end and comes out the other completely different than the way it went in. He was speaking of what government had become in only the first two decades of the twentieth century, where things went in one end with a certain expectation by the electorate of how they ought to come out but, in fact, came out quite differently. But the *language* of the outcomes meant different things to different people, didn't it?

And so who from among the long line of you "lovers of liberty", who have, from the thin edge of the wedge, piece by piece, scrapped the essential parts that made our Constitutional Republic, will stand up against the tide of historical momentum, economic convenience and your fellow politicos who like it that way to turn it 'round again? It is a job for heroes and I haven't seen one yet.

The rest of the world, whose consensus may be finding a different course in the affairs of mankind than the one you choose, knows, even if you don't, that in the end, the *greatest threat* to the American Constitutional Ideal **IS** the *Americans.* And all that the oppositions of the world to that ideal have to do, while feeding that machine and

feeding their own strength from it, is stand aside and watch us disintegrate ourselves into a pool of greed and self interest as money, prosperity and security have gone from a means to an end, as the founders intended, to an end in itself. R.S.

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29 March 2001

The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States
1500 Pennsylvania Ave.
Washington, D.C.

Mr. President:

You have said publicly that you desire to create economic stimulus. Your principal method of choice to accomplish this task would be tax relief, which, though you suggest that your staff has found several trillion dollars of revenue surpluses, may nevertheless have some difficulties altogether selling to the Congress, even some otherwise staunch allies in the Party. Yet, with respect, your Excellency has also not, that I am aware, expressly rejected any other viable method to accomplish the mission.

It seems evident from the most recent events in Congress that our elected elites primary special interest is getting re-elected at someone else's cost. Harry Truman probably had it right when he said that it is the special interests that facilitate the election of the Congress and it is they to whom they owe their first allegiance but it remains for the Chief Executive to be the sole representative of all the people. It is doubtful that your conception of tax relief will prevail in whole through your tenure. But the fundamentals of the Agriculture problem will not change regardless of

Congressional self-interest. Try a little Judo; let them fall with their own weight. You need another hook that is both reliable and incontrovertible. There is another way.

May we suggest that it would be very difficult for any potential opposition in the Congress, who have all along advocated for the preservation of family farming, to reject a proposal to settle cases of governmental negligence that may be demonstrated to have disabled family farmers and put them out of business. Precedents at law exist, such as the Pigford decision; which is the will of the Congress now. They really can't say no to the Office of the Executive. Who in either the House or the Senate is going to deny his most traditional constituency back home?

Your new administration made much, during the campaign process, of purported administrative and policy ill doings of the previous administration which it has pledged to rectify. Part of this mantra must include the shenanigans of a runaway Justice Department Civil Division that would falsify documents and use UN-ethical practices to slow down citizen litigants and drive them to bankruptcy and failure in order just to win or mitigate damages. I trust Mr.Ashcroft would very much like to establish himself as the moral and just man he has been portrayed.

By the way, the magnitude of reparations might be half a trillion dollars of potential economic stimulus, on a scale with the S&L's. Corporate farming has plateaued and the fastest growing segment of the agricultural production base is small, so called part-time farmers. Where else would old family farmers invest this reparation but back into farming? It is a lifestyle and a mindset. This could help re-fabricate our sagging, highly leveraged agricultural base where exports are down and hard currency will become more scarce and re-invigorate the general economy (remember, seven domestic non- farm jobs created for every farm producer salvaged).

No knowledgeable individual from any political persuasion denies that the conundrum of American agriculture must eventually require a lasting remedy about which quick fixes have up to now been unsuccessful.

You may find the concept a little overwhelming at first but be assured that it follows a very clear tangent of reason and law, to which end find herewith these position papers, readily expanded if you need further assistance. These working papers have also been sent to the Mr. Ashcroft and Ms. Veneman respectively.

Sir, your administration needs a truly Bi-partisan win, win situation to prove itself as the economy winds down and other new concerns come to the fore. I believe my associates and I may be able to show you a way. The country needs this.

I look forward to the opportunity for discussion.

Yours Respectfully,

Robert Stapleton

602-268-5089 @ 3

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29 March 2001

The Honorable John Ashcroft
Attorney General of the United States
Department of Justice, Rm.4400
950 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, D.C.

Dear Sir:

Our President has said that he desires to create economic stimulus. His principal method of choice to accomplish this task would be tax relief, which, though he claims to have found a trillion dollars revenue surplus, may have some difficulties altogether selling to the Congress; even some staunch allies in his own Party.

Yet, the President has not expressly disavowed any other viable method to accomplish the mission. The President has also said his administration has found a

potential other trillion dollars potentially dedicated to so-called "contingency". It would be very difficult for potential opposition parties, who have all along advocated for the preservation of family farming, to reject a proposal to settle cases of governmental negligence or malfeasance that may be demonstrated to have disabled family farmers and put them out of business. Precedents at law exist, such as the Pigford decision; which is the will of the Congress now. They really can't say no to him. Who in either the House or the Senate is going to deny his constituency back home?

The administration made much, during the campaign process, of the purported administrative and policy ill doings of the previous administration which it has pledged to rectify. Part of this mantra must include the shenanigans of a runaway Justice Department Civil Division that would falsify documents and use UN-ethical practices to slow down citizen litigants and drive them to bankruptcy and failure in order just to win or mitigate damages. I trust that you, sir, would very much relish the opportunity to establish your authority as the moral and just man you were portrayed pursuant to you confirmation.

By the way, the magnitude of reparations might be half a trillion dollars, on a scale with the S&L's. Corporate farming has plateaued and the fastest growing segment of the agricultural production base is small, so called part-time farmers. Where else would old farmers invest this money but back into farming? It is a lifestyle and a mindset. This could help re-fabricate our sagging agricultural base where exports are down, highly diluted global investment in American agriculture creates some unpredictable national security issues, re-invigorate the general economy and hopefully extinguish the dark and cynical sense which has descended on the American People that their government and particularly the Justice Department, shall we say in the most conservative manner and best light possible, hasn't always been completely honest.

No one from any political persuasion denies that the enigma of American agriculture, which in your inherited role as defense against the many claims of government negligence must choose either to continue the status quo or substantially rectify, will eventually require a lasting remedy about which quick fixes have up to now been unsuccessful.

As I have also expressed to the Chief Executive, you may find the concept a little overwhelming but be assured that it follows a very clear tangent of reason and law, which can be readily explained if you also need further outside perspective.

Mr. Bush's administration, of which you are an absolutely essential part, needs a truly Bi-partisan win, win situation politically, economically, morally and perceptually to prove itself as the economy winds down and other new concerns come to the fore. I believe my associates and I may be able to show you better way.

The working papers you will find attached have been forwarded to both the President and the Secretary of Agriculture under separate cover.

I look forward to further discussion.

Respectfully,

Bob Stapleton

Post note: The White House did respond with the canned appreciation for a constituent's concern about the issues and assurances that the President would look into the matters. Neither Mr. Ashcroft nor Agriculture Secretary Veneman responded at all.

Subsequently, five months later, the disaster in New York occurred, "9-11" and the nations economic resources for refinancing the infrastructure were diverted to a new war, not on any sovereign but on an amorphous tactic of war, "terrorism", which is as of this writing unresolved.

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Comments

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