

Agriculture by Cynthia Parsons

What organic farming means

The Institute for Alternative Agriculture is trying to sell American farmers on "energy-saving" organic methods.

Farmers are listening and watching,' Garth Youngberg of the newly formed Institute for Alternative Agriculture in Washington, D.C. told *EIR* Jan. 14. "This trend is going to escalate." Alternative agriculture means "organic farming," or the substitution of ancient methods of minimal cultivation, use of manure, and so forth for maximal use of machinery and industrially produced fertilizers and pesticides. Youngberg is using his small institute, supported by a government grant, to lobby for organic agricultural methods among farmers and on Capitol Hill.

Many of the methods used in organic farming" and "its use as a solution standard practice for modern scientific farming, when applied in conjunction with use of pesticides, fertilizers, and modern equipment. But the Institute for Alternative Agriculture is committed to a very different agricultural policy.

Youngberg joined the USDA in mid-1980 as Organic Farming Coordinator, one of the last appointments of the Carter administration. Youngberg's appointment came at the same time that the *Global 2000 Report*, which advocates "energy-saving techniques" for agriculture in a world where food production must drop along with population levels by the year 2000—a policy that can only be accomplished by genocide.

Youngberg's only output while at the USDA was the July 1980 Report and Recommendations for Organic

Farming, and he was let go, officially because of budget cuts, in late 1982. But although Youngberg claims there is little support at the USDA for his strictly organic programs—"Block is a conventional farmer, and bureaucrats run for cover if the man at the top gives no support," he told *EIR*—current USDA policies of curbing production, and the department's failure to fight the high interest rates that are bankrupting farmers all over the nation, will force farmers to change to what appear to be cheaper methods.

The real fraud of organic farming is that, just as with solar power production, it is prohibitively expensive on the scale necessary for the current population of the world. The handful of competent studies comparing organic to scientific farming methods show that yields per acre are lower, and food costs to the consumer will increase.

What is most cynical about Youngberg's organizing policy is that the only reason farmers are being driven to even consider his policies is financial desperation. There is no question that with increasing energy costs and less available labor on the family farm, chemical fertilizers and pesticides have been misapplied, and often overused. But any attempt to continue farming by cutting immediate costs—fuel for machinery, fertilizers, pesticides—would lead to dangerous drops in production levels in the face of drought or other natural disasters. And ultimately, the costs

would drive more farmers out of production.

Although he was apparently unaware of it until informed by *EIR*, the cause of anti-technology organic farming has been taken up at the very highest levels of the oligarchy committed to "preserving" soil, wildlife, jungles, and so forth and at the cost of human-progress and human life; the British royal family. In early January, Prince Charles sent a message to the first major conference on organic food production at the Royal Agricultural College, of which he is president, supporting "pioneer work" in devising methods of "organic farming, bioagriculture, alternative agriculture . . . which make better use of renewable natural resources" to replace "not only very wasteful, but probably also unnecessary" modern farming methods.

Youngberg was delighted at the information. "It would be nice to hear the President of the United States say something like that," he exclaimed. Meanwhile, "there is a lot of sympathy on the Hill," he claims, after meetings with members of the House Agricultural Committee in preparation for the reintroduction of the organic farming bill defeated by the Senate last summer.

Growing fear of financial disaster among farmers is demonstrated by Youngberg's approach to getting through the revised bill, for which he claims 70 cosponsors. Representative James Weaver (D.-Ore.)

is offering a "toned-down" version that focuses "on the economic aspects of organic farming and "its use as a solution to soil depletion." Support for any such measures to avoid the costs of scientific farming by resorting to marginal, and ultimately far more costly methods, will only endanger American productivity, and with it, the world's food supply.