

Agriculture by Marcia Merry

'Hang the Brussels bureaucrats!'

Thousands of European farmers demonstrated against the disastrous policies of the European Community.

On Feb. 12, over 23,000 European farmers and supporters demonstrated at two Belgian border zones, to protest the hated agriculture policies being imposed by the zero-growthers from the European Community bureaucracy in Brussels.

Almost no press coverage of this appeared outside of Europe, because the major media channels are following Washington's guidelines to play down signs of discontent over policies that are shutting down food production.

In Washington, D.C. right now, congressmen and administration officials have started working on the new five-year 1990 farm bill, and Agriculture Secretary Clayton Yeutter and a "background" group connected to the Trilateral Commission and the elite conservation lobby, want things to go their way with no ruckus from farmers or consumers.

In January, Yeutter hosted EC Agriculture Commissioner Ray MacSharry and the agriculture ministers of Canada, Australia, and Japan, to try to lay the groundwork for this year's round of agriculture trade talks at the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

Although there are differences in details between the United States and the European Community, both Yeutter and MacSharry are enforcing harsh policies on farmers, undercutting the food supply, and planning various kinds of "free trade" programs to give food cartel companies such as Archer Daniels Midland, Cargill, and the Italian Ferruzzi group free rein to dominate world food production and trade.

Consumers are expected to think that West European farmers are fat and happy, that they are getting heavy EC subsidies, and that there is plenty of food. Nothing could be further from the truth, as manifested by the spirit and turnout for this demonstration, and by certain other events now sparked by the crisis.

The same week as the anti-Brussels farm protest, farmers in Great Britain staged a big demonstration against the radical ecology programs now being used to undermine British agriculture.

"What AIDS Is to the World, So the EC Is to Farmers," proclaimed placards carried at the European protest. Thousands of farmers have been driven out of operation by EC Agriculture Commission policies since the mid-1980s. For example, the EC has ordered that grain growers pay a levy if, during any given season, they "overproduce" grain. The EC sets an annual total tonnage of grain that is considered the maximum, for example, about 165 million tons in recent years. If EC statisticians say more was produced, farmers pay a penalty.

Dairy farmers of the 13-nation European Community have been hit hard by a dictatorial quota system, in which each farm is given a ceiling for milk output. The farmer is fined heavily for any year that he tries to market more than his quota.

At the same time, the Brussels bureaucracy is promoting anti-farm measures in the name of protecting the environment. Last year, for the first time ever, the EC insisted that member nations implement a land conser-

vation set-aside program. The goal is to remove hundreds of thousands of hectares of food production land—much of which has been carefully tilled for centuries—and change the land into "wilderness."

Some of the farm organization leaders have played along with Brussels, but the grassroots membership is fed up. There were 15,000 farmers at Strasbourg on the Franco-German border, where a protest march lasted over two hours. When the crowd passed the buildings of the European Parliament, which has done nothing to improve the situation of farmers, the farmers shouted out, "Securitate!" to refer to the murderous security police of Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu.

The police barricaded the parliament building in fear of the crowd's anger. Calling the barricade a "provocation," some of the marchers ended the day by bringing a cow and some pigs onto a town bridge, to give the police something to worry about.

Simultaneously, in Aachen, West Germany, there was a demonstration of 8,000 farmers. Joining the demonstrators were a number of farmers from the United States, who had come over at the behest of the Schiller Institute. These Americans joined the French and German demonstrators in passing out 5,000 leaflets blasting the "liberal dictatorship" in Brussels.

The Schiller Institute was founded by Helga Zepp-LaRouche, wife of U.S. political prisoner Lyndon LaRouche.

The American farmers—from Minnesota, Ohio, and other farm states—plan to return to the United States and spread the word on the anger among European farmers. One of the signboards on the Feb. 12 march read, "This Is What To Do With EC Bureaucrats!" A drawing showed a stick figure hanging from the gallows.