

Caution Warranted in Examining 'National Food Policy' Objectives

AMERICANS would be wise to be wary of any proposal to establish a "national policy" on anything. The records show that national policy, in operation, is practically synonymous with federal control.

Food activists are advocating a "national food policy," intended to cover agricultural production, nutrition education, and aid to needy nations. These sound like worthy causes, but examination of detailed objectives and backgrounds of those promoting these causes as a policy justifies extreme caution.

A non-profit institution called "Center for Science in the Public Interest" (CSPI), headquartered in Washington, D.C., is an example of how food activists and governmental reformers are capitalizing on world hunger to promote their interests.

Dr. Michael Jacobson, co-director of CSPI, has announced a national "Food Day," scheduled for April 17, explaining that activities will center on the world food shortage, food prices at home and quality of the American diet.

Plans call for teach-ins, pressure on public officials to develop food policies, plant-ins of urban gardens, church-organized fasts and fund drives, "development of high school and college nutrition curricula which address political and economic questions," improvement of food stamp and school lunch programs, creation of food co-ops and farmers markets, and "consumer rejection of non-nutritious, resource-squandering junk foods."

It appears that the "national food policy" they advocate will be proposed in bills to be introduced in Congress, presumably providing for enforcement powers comparable to those Congress already has given to other "national policy" agencies. These include such bureaus as EPA, which deals with our national environmental quality policy, and OSHA, which deals with our national occupational safety and health policy.

CSPI has enlisted support of Sen. Hubert H. Humphrey, D-Minn.; Sen. Richard Clark, D-Iowa; Rep. Benjamin Rosenthal, D-N.Y., and possibly other members of Congress.

Also serving on the Food Day Advisory Board are Fred Harris, former senator from Oklahoma, and his wife, Ladonna, who is director of Americans for Indian Opportunity; Eugene Carson Blake, president of Bread for the World; Julian Bond, Georgia legislator; Norman Cousins, editor of Saturday Review/World;

Bess Meyerson and Robert Redford of New York, and other activists.

Direction of the CSPI campaign was described by Jacobson as "a unique opportunity to develop a national food policy guided by human, not corporate, priorities." He said our current food policy consists "of such elements as a lack of governmental control over giant grain exporters, a poorly publicized food stamp program, uncontrolled TV advertising that induces small children to buy foods that are bad for their health and no nutrition education whatsoever."

Presumably, CSPI has plans to change all of this through a federal agency or agencies set up to draft a new "national food policy," which would control foreign grain sales, promote more food stamps, control TV advertising and tell the public what to eat.

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