



THE RAM'S HORN

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Muddled Thinking on the Middle Class

As a heading, "Path leading to middle-class prosperity" seems harmless enough. The sub-head, however, conveys a very different message: "Canada must not follow the lead of the US, where income inequality has become an economically and socially devastating chasm". Globe and Mail columnist, and now aspiring Liberal party candidate for nomination in Toronto Central, Chrystia Freeland, then writes that "when it comes to today's economic revolution, a very small and very lucky and very smart group of people is already benefiting. . . . But the other side of the coin is the devastating hollowing out of the middle class in the western industrial democracies. . . . Without a prosperous, secure middle class, our national economy can't flourish in the long term. Our democratic society won't endure either."

- GM, 29/7/13

Such compartmentalized thinking is required to be able to discuss the erosion of the middle class with-

out any consideration, or even mention, of the vast number of citizens who constitute what was once called the working class – or, indeed, any real examination of the tiny upper class elite of very wealthy people, those now described as 'high net worth' and totalling about 300,000 in Canada. Despite the nod to increasing inequity, this discourse is designed to make us forget about the exploited working class and the exploiting upper class elite.

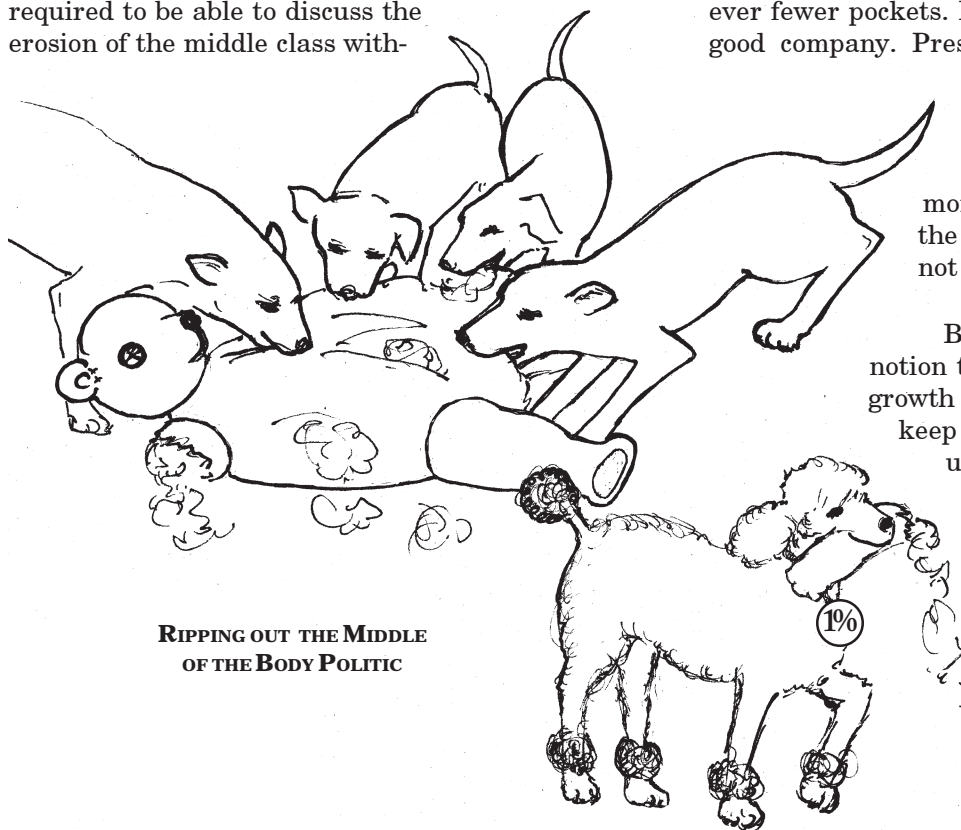
Thus 'inequity' can be mentioned without addressing the ethical issue of "today's economic revolution" that is benefiting, according to Freeland, a "very small and very lucky and very smart group of people". Lucky, yes, but very smart? Or do they just know how to game the system, hide their gains in tax havens, and expect outrageous benefits, as if they alone were responsible for the accumulation of wealth and power in ever fewer pockets. However, they are, sad to say, in good company. President Obama says, "More than

some other countries, we expect people to be self-reliant. . . . We've tolerated a little more inequality for the sake of a more dynamic, more adaptable economy. That's all to the good." - GM, 2/6/13 Obama does not say whose good.

Behind all this is the very popular notion that by some unexplained magic, growth of 'the economy' is the only way to keep the society functioning, however unfairly, even if this economic growth can only be short term, and is responsible for devastating climate change, most notable now in the vagaries and extremes of weather 'events'.

The most depressing expression of this we have noted recently is the statement by

. . . continued next page



RIPPING OUT THE MIDDLE OF THE BODY POLITIC

the man expected to become the head of a new union, dedicating the union to the well-being of the Middle Class.

In early August, the merger of two of Canada's biggest unions was announced by Canadian Autoworkers president Ken Lewenza and Dave Coles, president of the Communications and Energy and Paperworkers Union. Jerry Dias, assistant to Mr. Lewenza, is expected to become head of the new union, Unifor.

According to Mr Dias, "Our combined efforts between the two unions are to make the bold statement that we're going to fight to maintain the middle class."
— GM, 9/8/13

Silly us, we thought the whole point of trade unions was to amalgamate the power of the workers so as to restrict the capacity of their employers, otherwise known as capitalists, to exploit them. But maybe, like us, they have been reading Jodi Dean's challenging little book, *The Communist Horizon*, in which she notes that the term "proletariat" no longer resonates (she suggests talking about "the rest of us"). She doesn't, however, confuse middle income workers with the middle class.

Dean comments on the changes in the North American economy in recent decades, moving from manufacturing to finance, insurance, and real estate, so that only 16% of jobs in the US in 2007 were in goods-producing industries. While in the first industrial revolution, people were forced off their land and into factories, of the current situation, Dean says:

"If proletarianization initially designated the process by which those with land were disappropriated of it, contemporary proletarianization is the expropriation of secure, decently waged, skilled jobs and the creation of servants (who are required to smile, care, communicate, and be friendly)."

Doesn't this remind you of agro-tourism?

Corporate Irresponsibility

Beef packer XL Foods, now owned by JBS Food Canada, claims its operational standards met CFIA guidelines, and that if the company is found liable for the contamination of its products, then the CFIA standards were inadequate. So XL Foods denies any responsibility for the outbreak of *e coli* a year ago.

JBS, a Brazilian corporation, may get away with holding the CFIA responsible for the XL *e coli* contami-

nation since the corporation's operations are now so large and scattered that *e coli* and any other opportunistic diseases can play hide and seek forever without actually being kept out of JBS's food products.

In January, 2013, JBS USA, "a leading animal protein processor in the U.S. and Australia and a wholly owned subsidiary of Brazil-based JBS S.A", completed the purchase of XL Foods' Lakeside beef processing plant in Brooks, Alberta. The Brooks plant, one of Canada's largest beef processing facilities, has the capacity to process 4,000 head of cattle per day and is one of the largest employers in southern Alberta with 2400 employees. JBS Food Canada includes the Lakeside beef packing plant, a beef packing plant in Calgary, a feedlot in Brooks, and the adjacent farmland acreage supporting the feedlot operation.

According to its website, "JBS S.A. is the global leader in meat production with 301 facilities worldwide and more than 135,000 employees. JBS S.A. processes beef, pork, lamb and poultry in addition to leather and other animal by-products. JBS S.A. processes, prepares, packages and delivers fresh, further-processed and value-added beef, pork, lamb and poultry products in more than 150 countries on five continents.

"In South America, JBS S.A. conducts its operations through 108 beef processing, canning, distribution and other facilities, including 37 processing plants in Brazil, five processing plants in Argentina, two processing plants in Paraguay, one processing plant in Uruguay, and 11 distribution centers and five feedlots in Brazil."

— <http://www.jbssa.com/News/Archive/>

This makes it appear that JBS SA is the ruling authority, the sovereign, of the global beef. industry.

Bird Species Threatened

A report prepared by Birdlife International, a UK partnership of conservation groups, is the group's most comprehensive look at the state of the world's birds. It finds that 1,313 bird species are threatened by issues such as invasive species to climate change and especially to the rise of big farming. "We're very concerned about the spread of industrial-scale agriculture," it says. The clearing of virgin forests for palm oil plantations in Southeast Asia, as well as the intensification of farming in Europe and elsewhere are examples of how modern agriculture is transforming the planet and making it much less friendly to birds. In Canada, grassland birds have been among the hardest hit, partly because of the disappearance of natural prairie but also because hay fields and pastures have been repurposed to grow corn and soya.
— GM, 20/6/13, birdlife.org

Disney Creates Charming Agro-toxin Spray Plane

Disney's latest film, *Planes*, stars Dusty, an animated plane that CropLifeAmerica says "serves an agricultural purpose through aerial crop protection applications", otherwise known as "crop dusting". Disney provided the National Agricultural Aviation Association (NAAA) the opportunity to attend an advance screening of the movie in April. Following the screening, NAAA reported that any concerns about the portrayal of ag aviation had been alleviated.

The NAAA's newsletter quotes the NAAA executive director Andrew Moore: "I remain deeply struck by how great this film is for our industry. I grew up loving Disney just like many a child across continents and generations. The company that brought to life the cultural icons of Pinocchio, Bambi and Lighting McQueen now has added a principled, hard-working and kind crop duster to its inventory of beloved animated characters. It's a great boost for the agricultural aviation industry."

— *croplifeamerica.org*

More on Beemageddon

A new study has pinpointed some of the probable causes of bee deaths and the rather scary results show that averting "beemageddon" will be much more difficult than previously thought.

Scientists had struggled to find the trigger for so-called Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) that has wiped out an estimated 10 million beehives, worth \$2 billion, over the past six years. Suspects have included pesticides, disease-bearing parasites and poor nutrition. But in a first-of-its-kind study in the journal PLOS ONE, scientists at the University of Maryland and the US Department of Agriculture have identified a witch's brew of pesticides and fungicides contaminating pollen that bees collect to feed their hives. The findings break new ground on why large numbers of bees are dying though they do not identify the specific cause of CCD, where an entire beehive dies at once.

When researchers collected pollen from hives on the east coast pollinating cranberry, watermelon and other crops and fed it to healthy bees, those bees showed a significant decline in their ability to resist infection by a parasite called *Nosema ceranae*. The parasite has been implicated in Colony Collapse Disorder. They found the pollen was contaminated on average with nine different pesticides and fungicides though twenty-one agricultural chemicals were discovered in one sample. Scientists identified eight agricultural chemicals

associated with increased risk of infection by the parasite, though they took pains to point out that their findings do not directly link the pesticides to CCD.

Most disturbing, bees that ate pollen contaminated with fungicides were three times as likely to be infected by the parasite. Fungicides are widely used and had been thought to be harmless for bees as they're designed to kill fungus, not insects, on crops like apples. With growing evidence that fungicides may be affecting the bees on their own, the study's authors suggest that, like pesticides, fungicide labels might need to warn farmers not to spray when pollinating bees are in the vicinity.



BELOVED ICONS: DUSTY, BAMBI — AND BEES

Bee populations are so low in the US that it now takes 60% of the country's surviving colonies just to pollinate one California crop, almonds. In recent years, a class of chemicals called neonicotinoids has been linked to bee deaths and in April regulators banned the use of the pesticide for two years in Europe where bee populations have also plummeted. The new study, however, shows that the interaction of multiple pesticides is affecting bee health.

The study found another complication in efforts to save the bees: pollen collected by honey bees from weeds and wildflowers near cropland was also contaminated with pesticides even though those plants were not the target of spraying. "It's not clear whether the pesticides



are drifting over to those plants but we need take a new look at agricultural spraying practices,” says Dennis vanEngelsdorp, the study’s lead author.

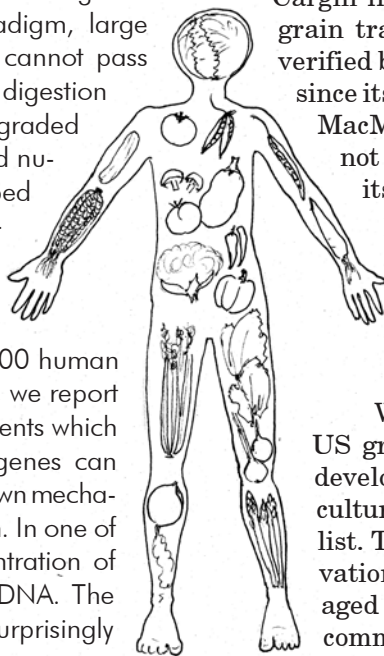
You Are What You Eat, part 2

The following is the abstract from an article in PLOS ONE, an inclusive, peer-reviewed, open-access resource from the Public Library of Science.

“Our bloodstream is considered to be an environment well separated from the outside world and the digestive tract. According to the standard paradigm, large macromolecules consumed with food cannot pass directly to the circulatory system. During digestion proteins and DNA are thought to be degraded into small constituents, amino acids and nucleic acids, respectively, and then absorbed by a complex active process and distributed to various parts of the body through the circulation system.

Here, based on the analysis of over 1000 human samples from four independent studies, we report evidence that meal-derived DNA fragments which are large enough to carry complete genes can avoid degradation and through an unknown mechanism enter the human circulation system. In one of the blood samples the relative concentration of plant DNA is higher than the human DNA. The plant DNA concentration shows a surprisingly precise log-normal distribution in the plasma samples while non-plasma (cord blood) control sample was found to be free of plant DNA.”

– *PLOS ONE*, 8(7), e69805, 2013, by Spisák, S., Solymosi, N., Ittész, P., Bodor, A., Kondor, D., Vattay, G., ... & Csabai, I.



Consolidation and Growth

Loblaws Cos. Ltd. Is buying Shoppers Drug Mart for \$12.4-billion in cash and stock. Second-rank ‘grocer’ Sobeys, is buying Safeway for \$5.8 billion.

Agropur Cooperative has purchased Coast Mountain Dairy, an important ice cream producer in Chilliwack, British Columbia. Founded in 1938, with 3,400 dairy producer owners and sales of \$3.8 billion, Agropur processes more than 3.3 billion litres of milk per year in its 28 plants across Canada and the United States under brands such as Natrel, OKA, Farmers, Central Dairies, Sealtest, iögo, and Island Farms.

– *CNW*, 25/7/13

Food Sovereignty or Corporate Sovereignty?

Despite the rhetoric about ‘national sovereignty’, for example with reference to Canada’s claims in the North, sovereignty has been effectively ceded to the corporate sector, as illustrated by the various trade agreements, starting in the current round with NAFTA. And if we want to talk about food sovereignty, we have to ask whose menu we’re currently eating.

For many years, probably many more than 100, Cargill has held the position of the world’s largest grain trader. We say ‘probably’ as this cannot be verified because Cargill has been a private company since its founding in 1865, owned by the Cargill and MacMillan families. As a private company, it is not required to release any information about itself – except for what it wants to tell the public to further its reputation and enhance its business. As owners, the two families continue to be the corporate sovereigns, though they leave their trusted officials to manage day-to-day operations.

While Cargill started out life as a midwestern-US grain trader, fulfilling a crucial role in the development of industrial, export-oriented agriculture, today its products are far too numerous to list. This is due to the company’s culture of innovation and genuine efficiency, which has encouraged it to learn how to take an apparently simple commodity, such as corn, and deconstruct it into ever smaller and more valuable components. HFCS – high fructose corn syrup – was among the first and probably still the best known of Cargill’s food components because of its ubiquitous presence in soft drinks (and the health issues which may now be constraining the use of HFCS).

Cargill has pushed this process so far that now there are probably few processed foods that do not include somewhere in the list of ingredients some Cargill product derived from corn, soya, cotton, beef cattle . . . you name it. Spend some time cruising around cargill.com for illustrations of this.

One could almost say that Cargill created the industrial food system. It certainly built a substantial chunk of it, building on the logic of its original midwestern grain trading operations in Minneapolis to achieve its present global diversification into producing, processing, trading umpteen food ingredients and products, as well as advising countries and international agencies on domestic and international agricul-

tural policy. Now Cargill has taken the process to the final stage, advising the world as to how the global population is going to be fed, if it is to be fed.

(It is crucial to note at this point that almost all corporate and charitable talk about feeding the hungry assumes that the hungry – including peasant and subsistence farmers – have only a passive role to play in the food drama: they are to be fed, not to provide for themselves. In other words, they are to be incorporated into the corporate-industrial food system as customers for agricultural ‘inputs’ and imported processed foods.)

So, what does food sovereignty mean if the rules are made by a private corporation that stands virtually above any national control?

Cargill chief executive officer Greg Page says that the basic rules that must be followed if the growing world population is going to be fed include “optimal planting practices, stable local markets, free international trade and an African continent that pulls its weight in agricultural production.” Addressing the World Cocoa Foundation, Page argued for “individual property ownership, especially by ‘small holder’ farmers,” and called for prices that adequately reward farmers for their efforts and provide enough money to motivate them to produce again the following year as “the fundamental ingredient of sustainable agriculture.”

–ST, 6/6/13

Page also said that for global food security to become real, agricultural surpluses most move freely from where there is plenty to where there is not. “Today only 15-16% of the food produced in the world crosses international borders,” he said, adding that Africa contains 60% of the world’s potentially available farm land, but remains a net food importer. “Africa needs infrastructure, policies and nonfarm income to realize its agricultural promise.”

All this may sound like good advice, or at least harmless. However, it must be considered in the context of the business class that Cargill belongs to and what its interests might be in advocating greater trade, privatization of land with agricultural ‘potential’ (also known as ‘land grabs’ for monoculture cropping of export commodities, including biofuel raw materials), improvement of infrastructure (essential to moving commodities to a local market or export) and ‘nonfarm income’ which would enable the farmers to purchase Cargill-supplied ‘inputs’. In other words, there are two ways to look at Cargill’s advice: What would have the most

beneficial effect on Cargill’s global profits, and what would increase self-sufficiency and food sovereignty in African regions and countries.

The scope of Cargill’s activities are indicated in this list of current projects posted on its website: “Cargill currently has \$2.6 billion of major agricultural, food and energy projects under construction, near completion or recently opened in 14 countries around the world. These include a poultry further-processing plant in Efremov, Russia; an integrated poultry production and processing complex in China’s Anhui province; additional poultry processing capacity in Korat, Thailand; an animal nutrition facility in South Korea; a corn processing plant in Brazil’s southern state of Paraná; a cocoa processing plant in Indonesia’s East Java province; and, in the United States, the establishment of a biorefinery campus in Fort Dodge, Iowa, and the modernization and expansion of a multiseed processing plant in North Dakota.”

–cargill.com

–cargill.com



In July Cargill added yet another link in its food chain: the purchase of a shrimp feed maker in Thailand, which is the world’s second largest shrimp-feed market, and in August Cargill bought Joe White Maltings, the largest maltster in Australia, from Swiss-based Glencore. As a Cargill spokesman put it, “The addition of Joe White Malting will complete Cargill’s global footprint in all key production areas and enable us to better serve our global and leading regional brewers.”

–ST, 15/8/13

The diversity and connectedness of these projects clearly give Cargill extensive control over the sectors in which it operates. It is hard to see how any far any idea of food sovereignty can get in this context. Once you reach Cargill’s size, with the quality and vision of its management, the world is your oyster – or industrial scale food system. There is still room for improvement, as Greg Page sees it, hence the pressure to conclude ever more trade agreements which, in effect, cede ever more national sovereignty to the corporate sector.

For the fiscal year June 1, 2012 - May 31, 2013, Cargill reported earnings of \$2.31 billion, nearly double the \$1.17 billion realized in the prior year.

Money Chasing Money Around

Private equity firm Hellman and Friedman is buying Hub International, Canada's largest insurance brokerage, from Apex Partners LLP, for \$4.4 billion. Hub provides property and casualty reinsurance, life and health, as well as employee benefits and has grown through 300 acquisitions of insurance brokerages since its inception in 1998. — GM, 6/8/13

The Perils of Industrial Food Production

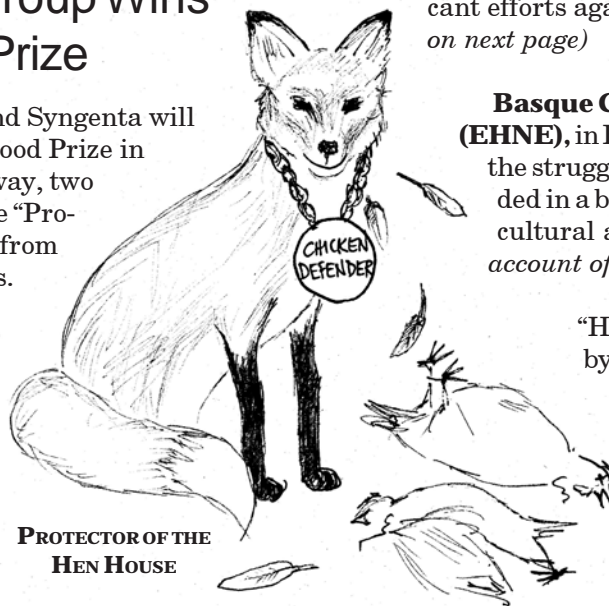
New Zealand dairy giant Fonterra, the world's fourth-largest dairy company – a co-op with 10,500 dairy farmer members – produces more than two million tonnes of dairy ingredients, specialty ingredients and consumer products each year and 95% of these are exported. Fonterra milk powder and whey protein have recently been banned from import by China, Vietnam and Russia after the company warned that a batch of its whey protein contained botulism bacteria. — GW, 9/8/13

Haitian Peasant Group Wins Food Sovereignty Prize

Key executives of Monsanto and Syngenta will be presented with the World Food Prize in October. Or, to put it another way, two prominent foxes will receive the "Protector of the Hen House" award from the World Association of Foxes.

Meanwhile, the US Food Sovereignty Alliance has just announced the winners of the Food Sovereignty Prize. The Food Sovereignty Prize honors "real-world, sustainable solutions to poverty, social instability and food insecurity," said Montana farmer Dena Hoff. "It recognizes effective and inspiring examples of communities making creative and truly lasting change in their food security – and in their democracy."

This year's winner is the **Haitian Group of 4 (G4) and the South American Dessalines Brigade**, an international peasant-to-peasant collaboration between peasant groups in Haiti and South America working to rebuild Haiti's seed, soil and agricultural systems.



Following Haiti's 2010 earthquake, which killed more than 180,000 people and displaced another 900,000, the collaboration between the Dessalines Brigade and G4 helped Haitian families address their basic needs to be able to feed themselves and displaced relatives. The Haitian peasant movement gained international attention at the time when they refused Monsanto's offer of seeds as 'aid'.

Recent reports of refugee camps in Haiti being burned and protesters dying in police custody indicate the ongoing severity of the situation there.

Honourable mention was awarded to three groups:

Tamil Nadu Women's Collective (TNWC), India, which organizes marginalized lowest-caste women in small collective farms and a statewide federation to strengthen their food sovereignty and thus their broader power, and encourages cultivation of native millet varieties.

National Coordination of Peasant Organizations (CNOP), Mali, representing some 2.5 million farmers. The organization works across the country to support family-based agriculture and promote the needs of a national peasant movement, including significant efforts against land grabbing. (See article on next page)

Basque Country Peasants' Solidarity (EHNE), in Europe's Basque Country, where the struggle for food sovereignty is embedded in a broader struggle for political and cultural autonomy. (See RH #295 for an account of our visit there last February)

"Hunger and malnutrition are not by-products, but an integral part of the inequitable and unsustainable global food system constructed by the agrifoods monopolies over the last half century. The concept of Food Sovereignty addresses control over food and food-producing resources – like land, water and seeds," noted Eric Holt-

Giménez in an article in *The Progressive*. He added, "I once asked a member of the U.S. Food Sovereignty Alliance what the difference was between food security and food sovereignty. She reflected a moment, and then said, 'You can be food secure in jail. Or not. Depends on if they want to feed you.' For Food Sovereignty advocates, there is no food security without food sovereignty."

African Food Sovereignty

Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA), a coalition of pan-African networks, with members in 50 African countries and representing smallholder farmers, indigenous peoples and civil society, met in Addis Ababa 12-16th August 2013 to formulate an action plan to safeguard Africa's sovereignty over its food, seeds and natural resources from the assault on Africa's food systems.

Africa's diversity and knowledge systems are being threatened by corporate and genetically modified seeds, agro-chemicals, resource grabs and laws that prevent farmers from freely using, sharing or selling their seed. These threats come from, amongst others, the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) and the G8 "New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition" that strongly promote the interests of multinational seed, fertilizer and agro-chemical companies at the expense of the rights and interests of smallholder farmers.

Currently, 80% of seed in Africa is bred by smallholder farmers, who freely save and share seed, resulting in a wide diversity of agricultural crops and a safety net for food security. "We are outraged at the way African governments are being strong-armed into adopting draconian seed laws that ensure the dominance of corporate seeds, giving private breeders monopoly and exclusive marketing rights over seeds" said Elizabeth Mpofo, from La Via Campesina Africa.

The G8 New Alliance places a heavy emphasis on nutrition that focuses almost exclusively on the bio-fortification of key staple crops. According to Bernard Guri from COMPAS Africa, "Bio-fortification is a dangerous distraction from real solutions for nutrition such as increasing crop diversity. We cannot look to dependence on so-called 'fortified' crops, whilst ignoring the real socio-economic causes of malnutrition."

The many pan-African networks belonging to AFSA all note with great concern the increasing acquisition of huge areas of African land by mining conglomerates and biofuel and export agribusiness. "Smallholder farmers such as those displaced by these land grabs feed 70% of the world. Their model of agro-ecological family farming is the most efficient and productive in the world. We must support them instead of undermining their knowledge and practice," said Million Belay, Coordinator of AFSA.

Member countries of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), in collabora-

tion with the African Seed Trade Association and the Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa, have drafted seed registration law that will be considered by COMESA governments in September 2013. These draft Regulations create a compulsory regional registration system allowing only marketing of private sector seeds, while criminalizing the sale of smallholder farmer varieties that have evolved over centuries.

In addition, African regional institutions such as the African Regional Intellectual Property Office and the South African Development Community have also developed draft intellectual property frameworks that only grant proprietary rights to the private sector varieties, while preventing small-holder farmers from continuing their practices of freely using, exchanging and selling seeds. These frameworks enable corporate takeover of African seeds and undermine seed sovereignty.

— source: AFSA, *War on Want* 8/13

Bruised Fruit

The Del Monte brand has been around for as long as I can remember, first on canned fruit and vegetables, later on dried and frozen fruits. The brand goes back to the 1880s, but its owners underwent many metamorphoses before consolidating under the name Del Monte Foods in 1967. Ten years later it became part of R.J. Reynolds Industries (tobacco) which became RJR Nabisco in 1979. In 1989, a private investor group (KKR - Kohlberg, Kravis Roberts) purchased RJR Nabisco and the fresh fruit business was sold and renamed Fresh Del Monte Produce. RJR Nabisco then sold the remaining food processing divisions, known as Del Monte Foods, to private investors. Del Monte Foods again became a publicly traded company in 1999, and in 2002, it purchased several brands from US food giant Heinz and left Heinz shareholders with 74.5% of Del Monte and original Del Monte shareholders with 25.5% of the company.



So why bother relating this confusing tale of trading? A brief report on the latest episode in the tale commented:

“The various Del Monte pieces kept turning up in strange and novel transactions, generating hundreds of millions of dollars in fees for the likes of stock brokers Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley”. – *GM, 15/7/13*
Now, after many more slice, dice, buy and sell operations, Del Monte, like one of its processed pineapples, is back on the market, being sold by KKR.

It would be impossible to calculate how much money has been taken out of the production, processing and distribution of fruits and vegetables over the past century and more, but the story of Del Monte should be a salutary, if depressing, account of how food is manipulated not to feed people but to make money for ‘investors’.
– **B.K.**

Syngenta On The Attack

To protect profits threatened by a lawsuit over its controversial herbicide atrazine, Syngenta Crop Protection launched an aggressive multi-million dollar

campaign that included hiring a detective agency to investigate scientists on a federal advisory panel, looking into the personal life of a judge and commissioning a psychological profile of a leading scientist critical of atrazine.

The Switzerland-based pesticide manufacturer also routinely paid “third-party allies” to appear to be independent supporters, and kept a list of 130 people and groups it could recruit as experts without disclosing ties to the company.

Recently unsealed court documents reveal a corporate strategy to discredit critics and to strip plaintiffs from the class-action case. The company specifically targeted one of atrazine’s fiercest and most outspoken critics, UC-Berkeley’s Tyrone Hayes, whose research suggests that atrazine feminizes male frogs.

The campaign is spelled out in hundreds of pages of memos, invoices and other documents from Illinois’ Madison County Circuit Court. The new documents, along with an earlier tranche, open a window on the company’s strategy to defeat a lawsuit that could have effectively ended sales of atrazine in the United States.

–*environmentalhealthnews.org/ehs/news/2013/atrazine*

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