

## Return to Surfdom

—Arthur Bolduc

At an Amish farmer's meeting in Mt. Hope, Ohio I once heard the story of Mennonite farmers in Russia during the early thirties. It seems that Joe Stalin wanted to consolidate small, family operated farms into large collective farms that were easier for the government to manage. The Mennonite farmers were called to a meetinghouse and asked if they would voluntarily surrender their farms to be consolidated into collective farms where they would work under the supervision of a Soviet farm manager. They unanimously rejected the idea. The Russian spokesman nodded to an assistant and the stage curtains were thrown open revealing soldiers sitting behind machine guns, and the Mennonite farmers were asked if they would like to reconsider. They did, and those who survived the ordeal and escaped Russia claimed that most of them would have been better off if they had chose to die before the machine guns.

Today in these United States farmers are being asked to voluntarily sign up to have their livestock inventoried into a national data base that would track their location and movement at all times. The premise, the farm or property where the animals are kept, will be registered, and with implanted computer chips under the skin or in ear-tags, the livestock and farm can be monitored by satellite communications. The property would also be subject to search at all times without a warrant. (One more chip and the farmer could be monitored also) With the Patriot Act, in the name of National Defense, they tell us this can all be done legally, if we don't sign up voluntarily.

It's all part of the NAIS, National Animal Identification System. NAIS has no basis in law and is illegal. Efforts to make it law have failed twice, and the USDA now has three bills in congress: HR-3170, HR-1256, HR-1254 that if passed, will backdate the work they are now doing illegally and make it law. (For more professional information from Karin Bergener, Judith McGeary and other lawyers involved in saving small farms, the 4-H, backyard and hobby animal keepers, click on: [www.libertyarkcoalition.net](http://www.libertyarkcoalition.net))

The farmer will pay the cost of the implanted chips or twin ear tags, the digital wands to read the tags, palm computers, personal computers, and software required to complete the program. The expenses would run into the thousands. For the parttime farmer, the pet owner, and 4-H kid, the technology would often cost more than the value of livestock or pets. And if you don't comply, the fines for noncompliance could be considerable—in the thousands. They tell us this is all in the name of National Security and food safety

Yet in the same breath while they are fleecing the small farmer, the 4-H kids and others, the USDA granted the National Pork Producers Council \$400,000 to induce hog farmers to sign up voluntarily.

What right does the wealthy, government subsidized, pork industry have to expect the citizens of this country to pay for a system that will allow them to control thousands of hog farmers, keep inventories on their livestock, have access to their computers and personal records and information. They claim they have signed forty percent of the hog farmers. These people control the hog market! If the hog farmers don't sign up, where are they going to sell their hogs? And that is just the start of the money flow to industrial agriculture for this pork barrel project.

While the USDA is giving the meat industry big money to promote NAIS and give them control over the industry, the Extension Service is on the verge of collapse for lack of

funding. Collin Peterson, the new chairman of the House Agricultural Committee, and champion of industrial agriculture, is quoted as saying the USDA, meaning the Extension Service, is messing up in efforts to implement NAIS, and he is going to do something about it. How many Extension Offices does he believe he has to close before they get the message? If Peterson can implement NAIS and pave the way for industrial agriculture to take complete control of our food supply, the Extension Service will be doomed and the Land Grant colleges will not be far behind.

We all know very well there are animal and population health hazards out there, but the USDA, at least the elected officials that big business, the food monopolies, send to Washington are not addressing, and they are not about to bite the hand that feeds them.

A couple of decades ago the average family-operated Iowa farm kept two or three hundred hogs on rotated pastures where manure could be disked in and pathogens were killed off by sunlight, fresh air, and soil saprophytes to enrich the soil. Today industrial agriculture keeps about 1,400 hogs on the same sites in confinement buildings—one big toilet—to hide their crimes. Think of a village of 1,400 people messing in bed and kicking it out with their feet. Will animal tagging help that situation?

Charlie Walters (*AcresUSA*) mentions that in California alone there are about 1000 feedlots with at least 1000 head of cattle each. Most have many times that number. And there are about 16,000 such feedlot nations wide and many smaller ones.

In spite of all the denial, it's petty safe to conclude that *E.coli* contamination in spinach last year in California came from fecal-contaminated runoff from feedlots or other livestock sources. It was systemic, something water borne and picked up by the plant roots, not something carried into the field that could be blamed on migrant workers not washing their hands.

The feedlot cows on a high grain and low grass diet shed E-coli profusely. Even medicated feeds that many feed lots use is wasted money and is only leading to anti-biotic resistant strains of pathogens. A new, resistant variant of E-coli 0157 that can't be killed with medication is making the rounds. If you treat it with antibiotics, it releases an extremely lethal toxin, shingella. R.R. Dykstra, DVM, who wrote the bible on animal sanitation, *Animal Sanitation and Disease Control*, that we all grew up with, must be spinning in his grave today.

Industrial agriculture's collective farm system did not work in Russia, and it was one of the big mistakes that brought down the Soviet Union. A glance at our over-processed, packaged and fast food diet and our pandemic of diet related illnesses (obesity, heart disuse, cancer, chemical related mental disorders, and the list goes on) along with the near two million acres of agricultural land we are losing annually to over-grazing, erosion, chemical pollution etc. proves it's not working here either. And there are more serious stress cracks showing.

There is in this and developed countries around the world a growing discontent with the industrialized farm food supply. In schools, rest homes and other institutions it's called a Cafeteria Revolution. At Farmer's Markets sprouting like weeds across the country it's called the "Eat local, Eat fresh" movement. Our government has failed us; they have allowed industrial agriculture and the food monopolies to dictate our food standards. It is estimated that as much as thirty percent of the population is seeking out organic or at least food grown locally. They have a right to know how their food is grown, so they have to know where and by whom. A glance at a milk carton with a two-week expiration date scares them; that milk is not fresh! Worse yet, a Veterinary Review article tells us paratuberculosis, Johnne's disease, is not killed of by heat and can pass through the pasteurization process. Dr.Lawler, a veterinary

researcher at the OARDC, Wooster, Ohio is working on a new 90 day test for Johne's disease that is revealing 16% positive reactors instead of the 10% with the six month test.

A second threat to Industrial agriculture is their complete dependence upon cheap petroleum. With expensive petroleum, even with government price supports, they will no longer be able to mass-produce food in areas of agreeable climates, cheap labor and ship across the country to undersell local growers. We are already seeing a return of the small, local dairies where the milk is never more than 24 hours old. How can they compete with the big boys who can under sell them? Easy, they have a better product! In New York City the black market raw milk trade is big business. The way to defuse that bomb is for more complete testing of cattle for diseases, such as Johne's, more grass feeding instead of grain and waste products of the food industry, and less dependence upon antibiotics and other medication. Raw milk would then be safe to drink; but strict disease testing would close the confinement dairies.

Before the coming of the eighteen-wheel truck after WW II, we grew most of our own food locally. It provided jobs, supported businesses and commerce that in turn supported, healthy, livable, farm communities that fed the cities. Our basic food supply was more evenly distributed and available to all. Ten or fifteen percent of our population was employed in agriculture. Today those jobs are gone. And with the selling of America, so are our blue-collar jobs, our industry, our seaports. As petroleum supported agriculture becomes more expensive and we need more jobs, we will once again return to growing more of our own food locally.

In fact, it's already happening. Green Field Farms did a market survey and confirmed what they already knew: that the American farmer is receiving only 5% to 20% of the food dollar today. To avoid seeing their organic quality produce, milk, and eggs thrown onto the market and competing with government subsidized, industrial agriculture on their terms, Green Field Farms are marketing under their own label. Organic Valley Milk is another cooperative that started out small with a quality product and is now growing as fast as they can clean up and convert dairy farms to organic production. Locally, here in Ohio, the Rex and Glenn Spray families are proving the midwest livestock and grain farm on a four year rotation under organic management is still a viable farm option.

This revival of sustainable or organic agriculture with a market that is growing at the rate of 20% per year has industrial agriculture in a panic. Just when they thought they were going to mop up the last of the family operated farms and have the market to themselves, people started becoming health conscience.

Most of these organic or sustainable operated farms are small. The cooperatives are made up of groups of small farms. One way to slow them down, since they can't bring out the machineguns, is to harass them with petty regulations. Since the large industrial farms ignore most regulations as a matter of course, they would be less affected by NAIS. This is where the computer chip companies in search of new markets came in. The giant meat monopolies needed something to give them the edge in world trade, and many of the European countries were afraid of our bioengineering, hormone use and other products of rogue science. The computer chip manufacturers worked on everybody's fears and greed to sell the ear tagging idea. Some were pressured into it to participate in world trade.

With twenty-five companies now lined up manufacturing the technology to implement NAIS, you can believe this is big business at its worst. But it is one of the greatest windfalls to come the computer chip and technology business' way in a long time. If allowed to get away with it, they will find other more insidious ways, if that is possible, to use their technology to control us.

Stalin enslaved the peasants of Russia in a system of industrial agriculture that promised to free them from serfdom. His collective farm system turned out to be a place called Hades. At least Stalin fed the people...well at least some of the time. NAIS denies the poor the right to raise their own food without paying tribute—that they don't have—to the corporate oligarchy, the National Pork Board, Tyson, Cargill, ADM, Micro Beef Technologies, Digital Angel, the National Institute for Animal Agriculture and others that are running this scam. If people can't feed themselves, they will be turned out to join the ever-growing army of homeless in this country.

I have attended a lot of Extension Service meetings and have worked with the Master Gardener's Program. They were all out in the open, well advertised, and they couldn't get people to ask enough questions. In contrast NAIS is being conducted very quietly. It is not being advertised, public meetings are far and few between and somebody from the meat industry is always there to run the show. It seems that only those dependent on the meat monopolies are invited. They have avoided the small farmers, the plain folks, the 4-H, the various goat and sheep clubs; anybody they don't have a use for or some influence over their market.

We can tell a lot about the character of a person by how they treat their animals, and you can be assured they will treat their fellow man with the same consideration. All we have to do is look at how the people promoting NAIS, industrial agriculture, treat beef, hogs, dairy cattle, and poultry in their confinement farms. I can abuse my tractor, run it into the ground if I choose; it's only a machine. But when we abuse helpless animals created by a higher authority in the same manner and make their lives wretched and miserable we become the most contemptible creatures on earth. To allow the oligarchy that is promoting NAIS to completely control the livestock market in this country will see the majority, the poor, reduced to a standard of living below Stalin's Russia where at least serfs were allowed to grow their own food. You can be assured the oligarchy will treat us no better than caged animals.

*Arthur Bolduc lives on his small produce farm near Amity, Ohio. He is a regular contributor to Farming Magazine.*