

NATURAL ORGANIC FARMERS

ANNUAL MEETING

SEPT. 16, 17, 18

PLYMOUTH, VT.

SAMUEL KAYMEN: OPENING REMARKS

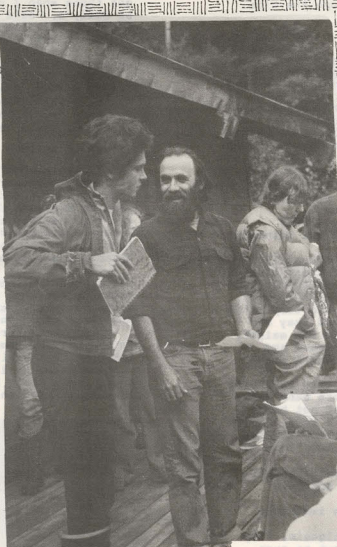
SURVIVAL AGRICULTURE IN THE NORTHEAST

It seems to me that survival in the Northeast is going to depend on being self-sufficient to the utmost degree and maybe more. You are probably aware that most agriculture is totally dependent on petrochemical industries and it seems to me that survival in the Northeast is going to have to be almost totally independent on petro-chemical agriculture. This means one thing for sure: We have to learn to farm so that the farm is an organism that sustains itself as far as fertility and as far as maintaining pest and disease free conditions goes. So, again, we know organic agriculture, ecologic agriculture does fit in. It's really important that we understand that organic agriculture is no longer just a kind of a fad or just a good healthy way to eat. Now we've reached a point where consciousness is such that organic agriculture is survival agriculture.

One of the suggestions that I'd like to make is that everyone's diet change drastically. I feel that we have to get ourselves to the point where we change our lifestyles so that everyone has all their food stored for winter in either community root cellars or storage bins or individual family size ones. In large towns there will have to be big excavations with large storage areas for root crops and other things of that kind. Storage technology is going to be one of the key things in the Northeast because of our severe winters and short growing season.

Changing the diet literally means that I'll give you an example of the diet that I envision in the Northeast for survival. It will include carrots, beets, turnips, squash, cabbage, onions, dry beans, potatoes, grains, dairy products and limited amounts of meats in certain situations. That's it, right and all the other things that we think about, that all of us are used to eating most of that kind. Storage technology is going to have to wipe them out of our taste buds and out of our memories because in certain number of years - I don't know exactly how many - it will be a necessity to survive on these kinds of foods.

So one way we can survive is to start learning how to grow these kinds of food well.



Samuel Kaymen (center)

It's going to mean some changes in our whole attitude towards food. Bulk buying, bulk storing and bulk processing will have to move further out and be cared for by farmers, distribution cooperatives, and local consumer cooperatives if it's going to be successful.

And with that - I don't want to make any controversial opening remarks - just that you'll have to change your life - I'll just leave it and see where we can go...

There are people leaving the cities. In this decade there are two million more people returning to rural areas than moving to metropolitan areas. This is well known. A lot of these folks are going to the rural areas like Vermont, New Hampshire and other states. There are several things I want to mention specifically. The question was asked, if not you should have asked me, about the new program beginning to address marketing directly to small farmers, and marketing directly to consumers. I'd like to just open up that subject. You people have been thinking about it.

Robert Houriet: Could I ask you a question concerning that direct marketing act? I understand there was a fight in the U.S.D.A. concerning who was going to get the "goodies" between the Extension Service and the State Departments of Agriculture. How did that come down and what were some of the forces at work there?

Carl: Well, several years ago, of course, the idea was proposed by the Department, the Department withdrew it, and finally it became active again. What the infighting was, I don't know, but I know it's signed into law and \$500,000 will be available. I think it's kind of a natural situation that the Extension Service should be involved and so should the State Department of Agriculture. In other words, change them. If they're not doing their job, challenge them with the opportunity. But every extension proposal that I saw was worked out with the state and there were some damn good ones. After all, the Extension Service has the responsibility for the educational arm of agriculture.

Robert Houriet: I'd like to go on down the governmental hierarchy to the state level and Silas Weeks. We talked during your program line on how one of the problems in changing anything on the State level is that you have an entrenched bureaucracy in the sense of federal guidelines that are already existing and programs that are already set up along certain lines. From your viewpoint, what's the time lag in changing administrations? How long does it take to change the bureaucratic structure? Does the bureaucratic structure just carry over from administration to administration on it's own? Is it an unbeatable force?

Silas Weeks: I think you folks here by now know the bureaucracy is an almost unmovable iceberg. It doesn't change very much. Let's go back to this marketing thing. The Congress put up \$500,000. Divide that by fifty states and you get \$10,000 a state. That's worse than nothing. Don't give me \$10,000. You can't hire one person for \$10,000. So they have a contest - well, that's fine for the

states that win the contest but the states that don't win the contest get nothing to help in direct marketing. So, tell your Congressmen if they are going to have a program, either give it some money or don't have it at all. That's the way it's got to work. Now we have something called Title Five on the Rural Development Act of 1972. The State of Vermont probably gets \$7,000 for extension and \$7,000 for research. The cost of that program in administrative time is twice as much as what it's been worth and the money is so piddling that nothing's going to come of it. They can buy an airplane - buy a bomber - what's a bomber cost.. a billion dollars? The figures get so big anyway - five hundred million dollars for a bomber - sure you get a product for that but you don't get a product for ten thousand dollars for marketing within a state. The bureaucracy has to be made to listen.

Robert Houriet: We've been talking about how to change things. One new change as far as organization on a governmental level has been regional in New England, and that's the formation of the Northeast Task Force Committee. Could you tell us Mabel what this task force is trying to do?

Mabel Gil: The Task Force actually started following a conference in the New York State Assembly and the title of this conference was, "Are There Food Shortages in Our Future?" Now, governments don't usually ask questions. This came from a group of inner city ministers, urban renewal groups, and the Archdiocese of Albany and also Cooperative Extension worked with us. The sponsorship was requested of Speaker Stanley Steingut. When he was asked to be sponsor he said, "I not only wish to sponsor, but I will give you a person on the staff of the Assembly to coordinate and help with the program." Now, following that conference, it was decided at that conference, in view of the problems that had to be addressed that we should initiate a task force. One of the prime concerns facing us today is the energy shortage and the fact that we are using sixteen calories of energy to produce one calorie of food is only aggravating the problem. A Northeast Task Force of Food and Farm Policy was created, composed of small farmers, consumers, legislators, and commissioners of agriculture. The main function of the Task Force will be that of an information clearing house. This exchange medium will not serve to suppress or hamper the work of anyone working with the food or farm situation, but is for the purpose of putting people in touch with other people in order to keep current the state in a way expertise in different areas, to enhance other beginnings, and to indicate where voids exist. We have met and been guests of the Commissioner of Agriculture in Hartford Connecticut. Last month we were guests of the Governor of Massachusetts and the Commissioner of Agriculture in Massachusetts. On October 13th and 14th we will be guests of Governor Shapp of Pennsylvania and Jim McHale who is the Governor's Director of Land Planning. In this particular conference what we as citizens, legislators, and public officials will be dealing with is the problems of nutritional research, the problems of rural development, and the family



L. to R. seated, Harold Gier, Mabel Gil, Carl Deitemeyer, Robert Houriet, Silas Weeks, Anne Just.

A panel discussion was held Saturday evening moderated by Robert Houriet of N.O.P.A. on the topic: "What Should Government Do For Small-Scale, Diversified, Ecological Farming?" Present were two representatives from the Vermont House. One, Anne Just, a member of the House Agriculture Committee and the other Harold Gier, chairman of the House Agriculture Committee. They spoke to issues of local policy which, although extremely important to Vermont natives, did not apply to our situations in Northern New York. Selections that appear here, true to content, do apply to us. The other members of the panel were: Carl W. Deitemeyer, senior officer, Co-operative Extension service, U.S.D.A. Washington, D.C., Silas Weeks, extension economist, University of New Hampshire, Durham, N.H. and Mabel R. Gil, program development, New York State Food and Farm Policy.

Carl W. Deitemeyer: Briefly on a general basis there are now gears in the Department of Agriculture related to the interests of small farmers. This hasn't been true. I've been in the Department for about ten years and this hasn't been true until this administration. There are task forces working all over the place on various subjects relating to small farmers and their particular problems.



farmer, and especially as it relates to agriculture. In all these areas we hope to get definite goals accomplished at the end of the conference because there is federal funding in these areas so everyone of our conferences have been goal oriented. People have come away with something. From the last conference we had in Boston, there has been an exchange of legislation and ideas. One of the things organized was senior citizens and inner city people into buying clubs. These people make orders themselves with their community centers. When the farmer who is contacted comes to that part of the city he has already sold his product. He's not looking for a buyer - it is sold. This way he has supplemented the income of those with food stamps and the inner city people and has also given much stronger foundation to the farmers in the area. These are the types of things the clearing house can do and what can happen when people actually communicate with other people.

Robert Houriet: From your various view points could you give us an idea of what you think is the most feasible step for a small association of organic growers to take in lobbying for change in agricultural policy?

Carl: Well, first of all, as I view the situation, you must have strong units, strong islands of interest in your own areas. In other words we're talking about Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine. Be sure your voices are heard locally, that you're on sound ground, that you get your plans clearly formulated. I'm talking about your state level first, then move that on to the federal level by keeping your Congressman informed and your Senators informed of what you have in mind. With the Northeast and it's peculiar problems, I would say that you could create a good strong political block, because agriculture, historically, back thirty-five, forty years, that was the strong block in Congress and today it's a very soft voice.

I think organic farming, small family farms, have a real fine place in agriculture. You're going to hear a lot more about them, especially when we begin to understand nutrition. This is one of the horrible things in America today. We don't understand nutrition. The average

family consumes fifty-four percent of their food as junk calories. To get back to your question, I think you've got to have a sound, active - people have to get excited about their product. They've got to support it. If you don't do that - forget it. A lot of people have the idea that all the great thinking and forces come out of Washington. Forget it! It's the grassroots, people out in the country that really make the government tick, and the louder the voices are at the grassroots, the more meaningful it is.

Silas: I've been sitting here being critical of the bureaucracy, and you should be. We've heard a lot of talk recently about something called citizen participation. The Department of Agriculture has been doing that for forty years and it was the lead agency for doing that. In every county there is a citizens committee that deals with the A.S.C.S., soil Conservation Service, and Farmers Home Admin-

istration, and County Extension Programs. Get on those committees. Most of the time they're begging for people to serve on them and you can get on them, but you have to talk to people who put you on them. That's a very quick and easy avenue to influence and to power within certain limits. Second, you do need to know what you want in order to be specific. Don't ask them to love you because you're organic growers. Tell them you want your fair share of payments for soil amendments, period. And you want your fair share of conservation practices because you are taxpayers, and your fair share of subsidies for whatever you want them for because you're citizens. They're not interested, particularly whether you're organic or non-organic but they are interested in whether or not you're getting some equity in terms of distribution of bucks for programs, for research, for extension, or whatever it is. Lay it on them what you want. Tell 'em!



Life is short but our desires are many,
And all mankind finds joy in living long.
When day and month reach this auspicious time
Everyone rejoices in its name.

The dew is chill, the summer wind has ceased,
The air is clear and all the sky is bright,
No trace remains of departed swallows,
The honking still echoes from passing geese.
Wine serves to exercise all our concerns,
Chrysanthemum keeps us from growing old.

But what is the thatched-hut gentleman to do
Who helpless views times revolutions?
The dusty cup shames the empty wine cask,
The cold flower blooms uncelebrated.

Drawing tight my robe, I sing to myself,
In my reverent deepest feelings stir.
There are many joys in living here,
And just to see it through is something gained.

Tao Ch'ien
year 424