Man's Relation to the Land

A Statement of Principles Which Shall Underlie Our National, State and Individual Actions

We hold:

God created the world, of which the earth is a portion, with a purpose, and through His loving Providence He maintains the world for the good of human beings. Therefore, all human beings possess a direct natural right to have access to created natural resources.

God's intention in creation is to enable man to live with dignity in accord with his noble nature and destiny, to develop his personality, to establish and maintain a family and to be a useful member of society. Society exists to fulfill these aims.

The Good Earth

The land is God's greatest material gift to mankind. It is a fundamental source of food, fiber, and fuel. The right to use such elemental source of life and development is essential for human welfare. No law or contract is superior to natural law. A fundamental human right is not to be denied or rendered ineffective by any legal ordinances, apparent previous rights or obligations.
stewards in the proper and most efficient use of the land and in such techniques as will make them masters of their own economic destiny.

The Tiller’s Rights and Duties

The worker on the land and his family possess the first right to the fruits of their toil for a decent standard of living. Second to such right come the rights of any non-operating owner and of the State. Rural people have the right to receive directly their just share of the economic, social and religious benefits in organized society.

The stewards of the land owe sacred duties and obligations to God, the community and humanity. A faithful and honest fulfillment of their responsibilities goes hand-in-hand with their rights and privileges.

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Suggested methods for the practical application of the declared principles on land policy:

1. Make use of the land an integral part of socio-economic planning and thinking.
2. Insist that education for land stewardship and the productive home be outstanding features of rural education.
3. Emphasize a special program of enlistment and training in secondary, liberal arts, technical and professional schools for professional service to the rural community.
4. Make the family-type farm operated by the owner a major objective of legislation and planning.
5. Reform the system of taxing land and improvements so as to facilitate access to natural resources, security of tenure and proper land use.
6. Revise land sale and rental contracts, mortgage obligations and other debt instruments so that no loss of ownership or insecurity of tenure be possible except through negligence or injustice on the part of the farmer-operator.
7. Discourage large land holdings as undemocratic and unsocial.

8. Where large-scale production is necessary and advisable, encourage the use of co-operative techniques with local ownership and management.

9. At all times encourage co-operatives as a means of intellectual, moral and material advancement.

10. Where and when large-scale industrialized farming exists and requires employment of seasonal or year-round labor, demand for such labor group a living family wage, decent housing conditions and collective bargaining.

11. Urge that wages and housing for the laborer on the small farms be decent and just. (Low wages and poor housing for the farm laborer tend to lower the reward and standards of living of the family-type farmer, bringing his own family labor into competition with the poorly paid hired hand.)

12. Extend social security provisions, particularly health, old age and survivors' insurance, to farm people and other rural dwellers.

13. Develop locally owned and controlled business and industry in rural communities.

14. Encourage development of the "one foot on soil and one foot in city" type of living as greatly advantageous to the family when adequate cash income is secured from work in industry or commerce.

15. Make land settlement possible for returned soldiers and displaced war workers through proper financial and educational planning, provided qualified people so desire and sound arrangements can be made.*

* [Land economists, rural sociologists, religious leaders and others interested in the well-being of the farmer who wish to express their support of this statement may communicate with either of the sponsors, Dr. Benson Y. Landis, 297 Fourth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y.; Msgr. L. G. Ligutti, 3801 Grand Avenue, Des Moines 12, Iowa; and Dr. Gabriel Davidson, 386 Fourth Avenue, New York 16, N. Y.—Editor.]
The Protestant signing:

Dr. Kathleen MacArthur
National Board, Y.W.C.A.

Dr. Henry W. McLaughlin
Presbyterian Church in the U.S.

Rev. I. W. Moomaw
Church of the Brethren

Dr. Hermann N. Morse
Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.

Rev. Donald F. Philstick
Home Missions Council of North America

Dr. Henry S. Randolph
Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.

John H. Riener
Christian Rural Fellowship

Dr. Mark Rich
American Baptist Home Mission Society

Rev. Clifford L. Samuelson
Protestant Episcopal Church

Dr. Martin Schaefer
Midwest Synod, United Lutheran Church in America

Dr. Rockwell C. Smith
Georgetown Biblical Institute

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Mennonite Church

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American Moravian Church

Dr. Thomas Alfred Tripp
Congregational-Christian Churches

Dr. A. J. Walton
Supt., Dept. Town and Country Work, Methodist Church

Rev. Ralph L. Williamson
New York State Council of Churches

Rev. O. L. Willits
Town and Country Dept., Ohio Council of Churches

Rev. Ralph L. Woodward
Yale Divinity School

The Jewish signing:

Dr. Gabriel Davidson
Jewish Agricultural Society

Rabbi M. N. Eshleman
Union of American Hebrew Congregations

Dr. Louis Finkelstein
Jewish Theological Seminary of America

Richard S. Goldman
Jewish Agricultural Society

Rabbi Herbert S. Goldstein
Synagogue Council of America

Rabbi Ferdinand M. Iserman
Commission on Justice and Peace, Central Conference of American Rabbis

Maurice Jacobs
Jewish Publication Society of America

Dr. Isaac Landman
Editor, Universal Jewish Encyclopedia

Dr. Solomon Leffzin
College of the City of New York

Dr. Julian Morgenstern
Hebrew Union College

Rabbi Stephen S. Wise
Jewish Institute of Religion

Rabbi Joseph Zeitlin
Temple Anshe Chai, New York