

Letter To The Editor: Land Grab Underway

JEFFERSON CITY, MO.

Three professors at Southern Illinois University have started the post flood conversation with a well publicized letter to President Obama. The professors would like the Birds Point Levee breach to remain open, turning some of the most productive farmland in the world into a wetland. Those of us who remember the great flood of 1993 can write the script from here; environmental groups will use Mississippi County's misfortune to attempt a land grab of massive proportions.

The least they could have done is wait until the water went down, or the proverbial dove arrived with the olive branch. The professors, without bothering to provide any evidence, claim that 200 square miles of fertile farmland would better serve mankind as a swamp, instead of producing food the world so desperately needs. I'm not sure how big the "I Miss Malaria Caucus" is, but it's imperative we drown this foolish idea in its infancy. The levees must be repaired as soon as it dries enough for dirt to be moved.

The academics rightly point out that post-flood, much of the land will be covered in sand, so the land is now "marginal" farmland. In other words, once the land has been purposefully flooded, we can buy it cheap. I'm reminded of the old story about the young man who murdered his parents, then threw himself on the mercy of the court because he was an orphan. That sort of debater's trick may lead to tenure, but it is unlikely to impress the farmers who are suffering from the worst flooding in nearly 100

years.

It won't escape notice that the levee was blown to protect Southern Illinois. The professors are not only deluded, but self serving as well. The lack of concern they show for the families affected by the flood is breathtaking, the arrogance shown by their cavalier disregard for the efforts of generations of farmers is shocking. People are suffering, and the best that the academics can do is to propose a plan that will make the suffering permanent.

The Corps blew the levee because they felt it was necessary to destroy the levee to protect the rest of the Mississippi Delta. It would have been better if some other alternative could have been found, but desperate times can call for desperate measures. Now, the U.S. government has a moral obligation to help those in the path of this man-made flood. The levees must be repaired, the ground must be restored, the roads, bridges, and homes replaced.

Food prices are at record highs, commodity prices are setting new records, and we need the food that can be produced on the land once protected by the Bird's Point Levee. Crop losses this year, and every year until repairs are made, will be over \$100 million. People need the food, Missouri needs the economic activity, and the farmers who have spent generations making the Mississippi Delta bloom like a rose deserve a chance to reclaim their lives. Δ

Blake Hurst, of Westboro, Mo.
*President of Missouri Farm Bureau
Jefferson City, Mo.*



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