EarthAdvocate

Educator & Activist Spreads 'Ecological Literacy'

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David Yarrow

David Yarrow is an activist, educator, independent scholar—and, primarily, an "earth advocate." He offers this brief summation of his career:

I was born in West Virginia. My father was from West Virginia and through the GI Bill got a degree in forestry. When I was 4 years old, we moved to. Syracuse so he could get his Ph.D. in forestry at the College of Forestry. I've spent 44 years of my life living in Syracuse, the center of New York State. I grew up in the 70s, which was. a time of social unrest and anti- war protest, so I became a social activist as a young man, concerned about bringing positive change to society, and continued an a path of activism in society and far nature all my life. These days I prefer to call myself an "earth advocate" rather than an activist. It sounds a little mare balanced and sensible. But my path since the 70s has been to try and lead human beings back into a positive relationship with the natural world. If I was to give myself a label, I would say I'm mast of all a naturalist. *I lave the world of nature, and I'm trying to teach human beings to take care of and live sensibly around nature again.*

Yarrow sat down with ***Acres U.S.A.*** for a far-ranging conversation about the present state of agriculture, the environment, health, economics and politics, and how the solutions to the problems in *all* of these various sectors of our society can be found in a single source: *nature.*

ACRES U.S.A.: How did you become interested in agriculture?

DAVID YARROW: Well, I discovered in my early twenties that the secret to health is what we eat—the quality of our food determines the quality of our blood, which in turn determines what kind of health we have. I've also realized that, personal diets aside, the way a society handles its food supply is a serious indication of its overall health and sensibility.

ACRES U.S.A.: Are you referring to the agricultural component, or the highly processed foods?

YARROW: No, this is just basic biology. This is the reality of being alive in a body—we have to respect the connection we have to what we eat.

ACRES U.S.A.: But there is a disconnect between the food that we grow and what we actually serve up to people in the restaurant or on the dinner plate at home through the grocery mechanism.

YARROW: I would say that there's not just a disconnect, there's a multiplicity of disconnects in modem culture that separate people from where their food is produced and keep them from really understanding what a life-giving gift their food is.

ACRES U.S.A.: You basically try to teach people this? Is this what you're doing?

YARROW: That's part of it. My work involves teaching and counseling people about how to heal themselves of serious diseases, and the primary tool I use is to help them regulate their diet. I try to show them how to be make wiser choices in the food they buy and how they cook it.

ACRES U.S.A.: Is there a common denominator in all this?

YARROW: Yes, the common denominator is our connection to nature—to the natural world. Modern culture is very alienated from—and even hostile—toward nature, and this attitude has led us to a very perilous predicament today on our planet. We have to develop a new relationship—a new philosophy—about our relationship to nature.

ACRES U.S.A.: Well, if we have radiation penetrating the chromosomes of our cells, or a shortage of nutrients or a marked imbalance, or any number of other environmental factors, aren't we in effect accidentally creating genetically modified human beings?

YARROW: That's a very good point! Even before we start splicing DNA, we're already manipulating the factors that give rise to life. Certainly we're dramatically altering the landscapes we inhabit to the point where they're artificial. Our food itself also has become very artificial and mostly manmade, not natural at all.

ACRES U.S.A.: This genetically modified person, then, could account for errant behavior in the population running rampant, shootings on the street corner daily, and so on—it's an expression of this disconnect between our culture and nature.

YARROW: Right. But even before we get into genetically modified organisms, one of the most fundamental things is that the modern diet is acid-forming. We have a lot of acid rain in our atmosphere, but we also have a lot of excess acid circulating in our bloodstreams, which is confusing our thinking and creating disorganization at a cellular level.

ACRES U.S.A.: We read these reports that say if you're acid, then you're dying, and if you can stay alkaline you're almost immortal. How *do* you stay alkaline with the food we're eating?

YARROW: It's a little risky to say "stay alkaline." You can go too far in that direction and get *too* alkaline. The key

word isn't acid or alkaline—the key word is *balance.* And our balance should be slightly alkaline.

ACRES U.S.A.: How do you achieve that balance?

YARROW: The most fundamental way is in the way we eat—the way we maintain alkaline balance is through the minerals that are in our food.

ACRES U.S.A.: I guess the thing we're really trying to get at here is, which foods will help you achieve that balance?

YARROW: The most important foods missing from the modem diet are fresh vegetables and whole grains, whole cereals, whole seeds.

ACRES U.S.A.: Rather than the pulverized flours we get in the pastas and so on.

YARROW: Right. Pulverized and over processed and leached and bleached. Let me put it this way: Our food is little better than our money today. It's a lot of fluff without much mineral substance to back it up.

ACRES U.S.A.: That's a good way of putting it.

YARROW: That's exactly the way to put it. I mean, if you want to start an economy, the most important thing that you do in any economy is to feed people. Food pops up wherever you turn as being a fundamental facet of our culture, the way we live and our well-being.

ACRES U.S.A.: And after that? Money, for exchange?

YARROW: The fundamental way that we generate money is through agriculture and food distribution. Feeding each other is the primary way that we create money in our society. It's what made America such a great country is our tremendous agriculture. But we don't respect and honor how important that is.

ACRES U.S.A.: You've developed a general philosophy, then. Why don't we explore that from the bottom up? In other words, what is it you try to tell people? How do you go about it?

YARROW: I try and teach people to understand the simple and fundamental relationships that underlie our life. So, for example, there are only two kinds of food that we can eat. We either eat plant food or we eat animal food. A balanced diet consists of eating both of those in some type of balanced relationship.

Another basic principle I teach people is to distinguish between food that's alive and food that's dead. If you're trying to heal yourself, you want to eat food that's living and avoid food that's dead. But most people have to rediscover this difference because they have lost this appreciation and insight. A lot of the work I used to do was to return what I will call common sense insight to people, so that they could understand what food is and how to use it for positive purposes and not just for entertainment.

ACRES U.S.A.: Where does cooking fit into this?

YARROW: I have a dear friend who's a master chef. He's a Japanese gentleman. And to him cooking is a very advanced form of art, because what we're doing in cooking is transforming the life of nature into the lifeblood of our bodies, and that's a very high art. It's a tremendous transformation that takes place in the kitchen around the sink and the stove.

Yet in modern culture, it's looked down on—we try to short circuit it and short change it and make it convenient and quick. So the rituals through which we honor food as we bring it into our houses and into our bodies have been corrupted by this modern culture. People need to reconnect with some of these simple things.

ACRES U.S.A.: In this spectrum, where do you place the fast food situation?

YARROW: Well, if you look at the expansion of our medical institutions and the big debate over our health care system, you realize that the very existence of such a massive and complex health care system is a warning that we're out of touch with nature—that we're degenerating biologically in this culture. Disease is rapidly increasing today—even though our lifespan is increasing, the amount of disease and suffering that we're experiencing is also increasing. When I started this work 30 years ago, perhaps one in 10 or 12 people was getting cancer and dying. Now it's probably pushing one out of two people who are going to have cancer and die from it.

ACRES U.S.A.: And this is strictly because of the food?

YARROW: I wouldn't say strictly because of food. But food is the primary factor that determines our biological condition.

ACRES U.S.A.: You've been doing this for 30 years?

YARROW: I had my first insight about food and health back around 1973 or 1974, so it's been about 30 years since I discovered the secret to health and began to use it in my life.

ACRES U.S.A.: That may be a happenstance, but that's approximately when we started publishing *Acres U.S.A.*

YARROW: I think—let's just say that light doesn't dawn in just one place. Light dawns in a lot of minds in a kind of simultaneous awakening for human beings.

ACRES U.S.A.: We're aware of articles you write for the various print media and so on. What else" do you do? Do you organize schools? Do you just take people one at a time?

YARROW: I guess the fundamental thing for me was that I realized we're headed in the wrong direction in modern society. We're headed toward degeneration and destruction of the natural world. So I made a decision back in the early '70s to find a different way to move us into the future, and very early I discovered this key insight about the importance of food for personal as well as collective social well-being.

I spent 25 years trying to develop a sensible and sustainable food system in New York State—that included everything from starting community gardens and food co-ops to organizing organic farmers and lobbying for state food policy. It led me down many different pathways and got me in contact with lots of different people and organizations. My life consisted of a series of projects: I started a natural food bakery, I helped start a restaurant, I started a center to teach people healing, and I also found myself traveling around the state organizing conferences and attending meetings to represent this different natural food philosophy. It was quite an adventure. At one point I even tried to create my own college degree program in food systems because there wasn't any such concentration of study. That was my work for 25 years; to help us prepare for the .future by organizing sustainable food systems.

ACRES U.S.A.: On a scale of one to 10, where would you put the fruits or the results of your efforts?

YARROW: I guess I still feel that we're woefully unprepared to face the kind of future we're headed for on this planet—but we *have* begun to create the basic framework of a regionalized sustainable food system here in the Northeast, and I see evidence of it in many other parts of the country. As the supply of oil and chemicals dwindles and becomes too expensive to support our currently unsustainable artificial food system, we now have other people and other structures we can fall back on to develop a reliable regional food system. So, we have the elements of what we need to prepare for the future, but we ain't ready yet! Here in the Northeast, we're still importing probably 80 to 90 percent of our food this time of year, and it's coming from at least 1,000 to 2,000 miles away.

ACRES U.S.A.: Where do you place this progress with regard to farmers? Are we going to have to turn over all of agriculture and bring in an entirely new group of people?

YARROW: The basic reality is that we need a crash program to train a lot of new farmers. We don't have enough farmers. We've been decimating our agricultural populations, and there are fewer and fewer people who understand how to grow food and how to distribute and market food effectively in a regional sustainable food system. So we need to develop programs—*not* to train agricultural scientists—but to train *actual farmers* to go out there and grow food and put it into the food system. In the Northeast, we could stand to have five times as many farmers—particularly small, local farmers—than we currently have.

ACRES U.S.A.: But that's not the impulse we're getting but of official Washington. If you look at the appointments made…

YARROW: Oh, no. Washington's still putting people out of farming, out of agriculture. They're still destroying jobs and livelihoods in agriculture by turning it into big business.

ACRES U.S.A.: The officials in charge of closing out farmers and cutting off their support loans and so on seem to get an award of merit when they can close down a case and sell someone out. And these farmers have to be replaced, don't they, somewhere along the line? Now, I know we have a lot of young people who are tired of punching computers and time clocks, so they're going back to the farm. Do you foresee any kind of trend in that direction?

YARROW: It's hard for me to know. I don't have a lot of contact with the college-age generation these days. I *do* sense that there is a lot of unrest among the younger generation about what their future is going to be like, and a lot of concern to find a different way than the one that's being promoted in Washington and most state capitals. But I don't see any coherent, organized movement like I experienced in the '70s, when we had the era of civil rights and the Vietnam War protest and so on. That was a very unique activist period in American history. I don't see that kind of energy appearing yet.

ACRES U.S.A.: It doesn't seem to be duplicated in connection with the Iraq War, does it?

YARROW: Doesn't seem to be, although certainly if you look at the poll numbers, you realize that America is balanced on a razor edge. America could go either way right now. Like we keep talking about Iraq being at a tipping point, America too is at a tipping point where it could go to either extreme. Right now it's leaning a bit to the right, but I think soon we'll have our fill of the horror that is war and we'll tip the other way.

ACRES U.S.A.: Well, in the meantime, those of us connected with agriculture will keep plodding along, working on sustainable systems. Recently you've exhibited an interest in the work of Dr. Maynard Murray, the sea solid investigator. Why don't you relate some of your findings in that direction?

YARROW: If you understand the natural world, you know that the fundamental nutrients we get are the minerals—the raw, elemental substances. So one thing I've tried to do in my 30 years of working with organic farmers is to encourage them to restore the minerals to their soil. I've explored and advocated a variety of methods to do that, mostly using rock powders—ground-up rocks.

Then, about the year 2000, the turn of millennium, I got a copy of Maynard Murray's book, *Sea Energy Agriculture.* I read it and realized he had discovered the most efficient, the most effective way to put the minerals back into the soil. Unfortunately, the major cost is in transporting these minerals around. Murray found the most cost-effective way, the most material-efficient way to get that job done.

ACRES U.S.A.: And Murray was especially interested in the specific mineral balance found in seawater, right?

YARROW: What he discovered was that we don't just want to put the minerals back in the soil, but that these minerals also need to be in their proper ratios—and those are the ratios that are in seawater. The ratio of elements in seawater is the same as in your blood and in embryonic fluid. So when we put sea minerals on the land, we're not just restoring the fertility, we're restoring the total health of the soil. It's a different concept than just fertilizing the soil—we are actually returning the whole foundation of health to the soil, because when the minerals are present in their proper relationships, the whole can work together as a unified, balanced system. This is a type of thinking that's unfortunately not used in modern medicine or modern agriculture—the whole-systems approach to this question of fertility.

Murray gave us a key insight about how to put the minerals back into our soil and therefore back into our food, and he spent 30 years of his life demonstrating conclusively that it *works.* The plants don't merely resist disease—if they're given a full balanced menu of minerals, they refuse to get disease. Their immune systems function at their optimum effectiveness.

Murray gave us this tremendous insight, and unfortunately he died believing that no one cared. But now, we're trying to resurrect his work and make it available to growers. And we need to get the actual material—the sea minerals—into the hands of farmers and into their soil. And *that* means we need to start a business to distribute this substance and teach farmers how to use it effectively.

ACRES U.S.A.: How far along are you in doing that?

YARROW: Well, after *Acres U.S.A.* published my article on Murray in November 2001, I met. Bob Cain and we started this business. It took us a year to get it set up, and last year we got the first two truckloads of minerals delivered into the United States. We're going at this year by year, and it's going to be a slow, gradual process to make farmers aware of this method that Murray perfected and get them to try it, and then gradually

implement it on their whole farm.

ACRES U.S.A.: How economically feasible is this in view of the transportation costs?

YARROW: I don't have any bottom-line figures yet, but I can tell you that Murray's method is cheaper than any other method of distributing minerals I've found. The cost of transportation is generally lower, and the nice thing is that although currently we're shipping dehydrated minerals into the country from a desert, we can also extract these minerals straight out of the ocean and concentrate them into a liquid form. So any place that has access to deep ocean water can have access to a supply of these minerals. You don't have to ship them all the way from Baja, California. So there's a potential of minimizing transportation.

ACRES U.S.A.: You're speaking of these minerals in a general way, but have you ever gotten down to the nitty-gritty of what this or that specific mineral does?

YARROW: That's an emerging area of understanding. We know quite a bit in agricultural science about the major minerals and the organic minerals, how they operate and how they cycle through a biological system. But we're still learning about the trace elements—and the *real* power of biological systems is in the trace elements. A microgram of cobalt will get you a lot further than a gram of sodium because of its role in key enzymes and hormones in the body.

So, we are still learning how to evaluate the necessary nutrients in our food and what their functions are. Most recently, for example, we discovered that germanium—which is used to make semiconductors—also seems to have a key role in the body's defense against cancer. Thus, we've added yet another trace element to the list of those that are considered essential. We've only looked at less than a third of all the elements that we need. We're still learning about this phenomenon of trace elements, and it's hard to find good information.

ACRES U.S.A.: Because Henry Schroeder's book, *The Trace Elements and Man*, did not sell very well. As a matter of fact, it languished on the shelves. But suddenly, in the last year or so, trace minerals have commanded the attention of a lot of investigators as well as journalists.

YARROW: It's coming. I just visited someone in the hospital last night, and he had an IV in his arm. They were dripping saline solution into his blood, but that saline solution was not a full menu of minerals, they were just giving him probably sodium and two or three other minerals, not a full supply of all the minerals that are needed for healthy blood. Medical science doesn't yet realize the essential nature of these trace elements, and fails to assure that patients in a medical institution get *all* of their elements in their saline solutions, not to mention their food! There's a lot of work ahead to fully understand the technical details of this nutrient problem.

ACRES U.S.A.: Just about any physician will tell you that human blood is very close to sea water, but you rarely find a physician who can tell you where the idea came from. And of course, we know it came from this man—Rene Quinton in France—who used ocean water for blood transfusions during big pandemics, very successfully on test animals.

YARROW: When I was at the Acres Conference in December, on the last evening I met a man from Kansas who told me a wonderful story. He had a friend whose parents left Belgium after World War II and came to the United States. They told their son how, when the Germans invaded Belgium at the beginning of World War II, they bombed the dikes that held back the North Sea, which then flooded a lot of the coastal farmland in Belgium. The usual purveyors of conventional wisdom told the farmers, "You won't be able to grow any crops this year, because your land's been poisoned by seawater." Farmers being farmers, they went out and tried to grow food again, only to discover that the year after the lands had been reclaimed from the sea, they grew the *best crops they had ever seen* on their soil, demonstrating on a large scale what we're trying to do with Maynard Murray's research today.

ACRES U.S.A.: We've encountered a similar story about an irrigation project in North Africa that faltered. They gave it one shot of seawater instead of the usual irrigation water and got the best crops ever. Naturally, there has to be a dilution equation worked out of how much of the sea solids you actually use to the best effect, but apparently the range of minerals that are delivered to very hungry crops is satisfied by this ocean water.

YARROW: I guess going back to my early insights about what was happening, I used to ride a bicycle around the city on my errands, and I paid close attention to the land and the plants around me—and even way back in the '70s, I observed that the trees and plants in our urban areas are not thriving and growing. It's not a good sign, and the fundamental reason is that nature is starving for lack of nutrients in the soil.

ACRES U.S.A.: And being assaulted by pollution, I imagine.

YARROW: Right. Acid rain accelerates the aging of soil. Just plowing up the soil rapidly accelerates its deterioration, because you don't have a network of roots in the soil any longer to capture and hold nutrients. Once you disturb that whole network of roots, then the minerals leach out of the soil system.

ACRES U.S.A.: Are you a trained agronomist?

YARROW: No, I was actually trained in computer science and electronics.

ACRES U.S.A.: But you're self-educated in this area?

YARROW: You have no choice but to be self-educated in this area, because the conventional institutions are not teaching an enlightened form of agriculture, human nutrition and food-system organization, so we have to teach ourselves this stuff all over again.

ACRES U.S.A.: What are you doing at the present time?

YARROW: I have two important focuses. One is developing this sea-mineral distribution business to make Maynard Murray's materials and methods available to modern farmers, and another is to develop programs to teach ecological literacy and nature awareness to the next generation of youth. I'm very concerned that we're teaching *computer* literacy to young people, but we're not teaching them *ecological* literacy—how to understand nature and participate in it. Most kids don't even understand what a seed is anymore—how to plant a seed and help it grow into a plant. We need to start teaching this fundamental ecological literacy, because it will ultimately be more important to their survival than computer literacy. I'm trying to promote programs here in New York State where people, teachers and schools are developing programs to teach this

ecological literacy to young people.

ACRES U.S.A.: What kind of rapport have you been able to develop with education, lower grades, university, etc.?

YARROW: Not much at this point. I'm just beginning to embark on this adventure. The middle school across the street from me has a 10,000-square-foot organic garden as of two years ago, and they also have a $20,000 solar electric system—so right across the street from me is one opportunity to help develop this kind of .ecological literacy curriculum. I also have about 10 other projects around the state where people are already pursuing this work and developing ideas for how to make it happen. It's going to be another year or two before I'm able to get all these pioneers together and develop some type of overall program, or overall curriculum.

ACRES U.S.A.: Are you familiar with the school program that Paul Stitt and his wife, Barbara Reed Stitt, have initiated in Wisconsin? They've thrown the soda pop and the sandwiches out of the school and have installed a cook in the kitchen. Now they feed these kids good organic lunches.

YARROW: Right—and we shouldn't just *feed* them good organic lunches, we should involve them in preparing and serving that food, so they have complete participation in the rituals of eating that are important to us all.

A friend of mine in New Hampshire, Hiroshi Hayashi, is a blue-ribbon, four-star master chef who has run some of the best natural food restaurants in the Northeast for quite a few years. He's now retired, and teaches natural food cooking and food service management. He's taken a Waldorf high school with 150 live-in students where he feeds the students three meals a day of natural organic foods. And one of his teaching assistants wrote her master's dissertation documenting the changes in academic performance and psychological behavior that have happened as a result of this shift. Hiroshi is very excited about teaching more people how to prepare and serve natural foods in public schools.

ACRES U.S.A.: And in the process, he's probably instilled a lot of mental acuity in kids that might otherwise become errant performers.

YARROW: Right! I'm trying to encourage people who are concerned about school food systems to take Hiroshi's training program in natural food cooking and food service management, and then use that in their own community to create a better food system in their schools. It's a difficult thing, because it's not just a matter of getting the right foods—the whole way the school food system is structured is to contract out to profit-driven institutions, so it's very hard to change. It's a big political and institutional issue.

ACRES U.S.A.: How do you best make an end-run around all these processed foods?

YARROW: At this point, it mostly depends on the determination and the willpower of individual citizens to make changes in their own communities. If that key resource is in place, if there are people who will do whatever it takes to bring good food to their community, then it can happen. Right now, the mainstream culture is going the other way—they're starting to contract school food services out to fast food businesses.

ACRES U.S.A.: And to Coca-Cola or Pepsi.

YARROW: It's just beginning to turn around—for example, the Governor of California has announced his initiative to remove junk food from public schools in the state. That's quite a radical turnaround.

ACRES U.S.A.: It is a large and highly visible bully pulpit that he's speaking from.

YARROW: Right. Hopefully just him using this rhetoric will wake up a lot of people and inspire a lot of citizens to get working in their own communities to make this governor's initiative actually happen in that state—and what happens in California may happen in the rest of the country in the due course of history. Let's hope so. I know that people like you and I have done a lot of work over the last 30 years to put in the foundation for a new sustainable food system, so we have that backbone to build on now and make it happen.

ACRES U.S.A.: So where do we go from here?

YARROW: One step at a time. I wish I could say I can see how we're going to get to the finish line, but I don't know of anybody who really has a master plan for transforming American society.

ACRES U.S.A.: So basically, it's just take it one day at a time, isn't it?

YARROW: Well, one year at a time, one growing season at a time, and see how many more farmers we can get involved, see how much more land we can restore to maximum or optimum fertility, and see how much more food we can produce each year that's whole and complete and balanced. To me the most important piece of work is to set up programs to train more farmers. We don't have enough farmers in this country. Once the supply of oil starts to run out and the price runs up, we're going to be really hard-pressed to grow enough food to feed ourselves in America.

ACRES U.S.A.: We're not feeding ourselves now! We're importing at least as much as we're exporting. Last year it was a wash, and the truth of the matter is we're short. If we didn't have the imports, we wouldn't be able to feed the country now.

YARROW: Once you start importing more food than you're growing yourself, you have an economy that's losing money, not making money. That's the situation America has fallen into.

ACRES U.S.A.: People don't seem to understand that. They don't understand that the production—the conversion of solar energy into energy we can use—is really the source of the money supply.

YARROW: We seem to have a hard time understanding that nature has the answer to *all* of our problems. The big hope right now is to develop a hydrogen economy. There's a lot of technological experimentation to figure out how to do this, and how to implement it all across our society. If we just take a look, we'll discover that nature developed a hydrogen economy close to 2 billion years ago—a billion and a half, anyway. That's what trees do, that's what plants do—they extract the hydrogen atoms off of water molecules .and use that energy to fuel plant metabolism. Plants invented a hydrogen economy based on water a long, long time ago. So if we want to understand how to develop a hydrogen economy in our own society, we should model our culture on nature. But I don't see this kind of simple, yet essential, thinking emerging widespread in our society yet.

ACRES U.S.A.: It always comes down to the bottom line. So, do you consider

yourself a prophet or a messiah—or neither?

YARROW: I've always avoided the label "prophet." I was trained in science and mathematics. I was very good at those subjects in school, and I believe that if you just extrapolate the data of where we're headed, it doesn't take metaphysical vision to predict where it's taking us—and we're headed for trouble.

It's not only, I mean the old paradigm was, "Columbus taught us the world is not flat." Today we're discovering that not only is the world round, but it's also very finite, and we're about the overrun the limited boundaries of what this planet can supply. One might say we're still engaged in this paradigm shift that was initiated with Columbus' voyage of discovery. We only have a few more years to wake up and realize the implications of this round-earth theory we're now looking at.

I have faith that we'll get there, though. The overwhelming thing that has always convinced me we can get over this challenge to our future is *communication.* We have the ability to communicate over fantastic distances thanks to this marvelous technology and our global networks. As long as we can talk to each other and share information, we have the capacity to develop the understanding we need to change ourselves, and therefore change our world. That's what I think ended communism—it wasn't the arms race, it was the simple act of sending information behind the Iron Curtain.

ACRES U.S.A.: Is this idea you have of growing and supplying food locally an answer to this World Trade Organization madness that we're involved in?

YARROW: I can't say that I have the data to prove that, but it's very clear that the current process of using American agricultural subsidies to ship cheap food around the world and destroy the agriculture and food supply of other nations is not the way to get us into a sustainable future. We need to develop local, regional food systems, and stop using agricultural policy in America to destroy local, regional food systems. We need to turn around completely.

ACRES U.S.A.: This adds agriculture to the indicated change for medicine and a lot of other things, doesn't it?

YARROW: When I started this work in the '70s, President Nixon appointed Earl Buts to be the secretary of agriculture, and his comment was, "Food is a weapon." That's not a very enlightened approach at all. Food is *life.* It's not a weapon. It's not a tool of war. But that is where we were in the '70s—we were seeing this war mentality infecting everything in our culture, including our view of what food is and how to grow and distribute food. It's time to make peace with nature and learn how to participate wisely and sensibly with it.

ACRES U.S.A.: Of course, food is a weapon if you're focused on the idea of building an empire.

YARROW: The imperial urge is still very much with us—on the whole, the American mind is obviously still in a fever of imperialism.

ACRES U.S.A.: It started possibly back in 1898, with the invasion of Cuba. We were going to implant democracy in Cuba—and all they've ever had since then is one dictator after another. I wonder if we're going to have any better success in Iraq.

YARROW: It's a perilous endeavor, and I would say that we're not getting off on the right foot in Iraq. But I do think what's important to realize is that human beings, being spiritual, all share a common dream, and that dream is to live in peace and to live with abundance and to live in harmony. To achieve a state of love, if you like. Everyone has this inside them. It's a universal ambition that human beings have, so wherever we go on the earth, we'll find people who want to be free, who want to live sensible lives.

ACRES U.S.A.: But are we contributing to that when we go into Iraq and force them to take GMO seeds whether they want to or not?

YARROW: We could be in Iraq for 50 years and use our military to force people to do it our way, but as soon as we back off and take our foot off their necks, they'll stand up and start living sensible lives, because it's the way human beings are biologically and spiritually constructed.

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