

At group's annual meeting

Food is not weapon, Stone tells NFU

ORLANDO, Fla. — Making his first annual report as president of the National Farmers Union, George W Stone declared that U.S. food power should be used as a

constructive force for peace rather than a negative diplomatic tool. Speaking at the 79th annual convention of the organization being held at the Hyatt Orlando

Hotel, Stone asserted that world grain and food supplies may tighten considerably by the end of the year.

"Because the U.S. will likely have the principal available grain stocks, we will have food power but we need to handle this responsibility wisely," he said. "Food should be the last thing, not the first thing, we use as a political weapon. The food pipeline should be the last commercial link which should be severed when there are seemingly insoluble problems between nations."

The Farmers Union official said there should never again be an instance, like the 1980 embargo on grain shipments to the USSR, in which food is singled out as the principal political weapon.

"There would have been little criticism of the Russian grain embargo if it had been part of a general embargo such as was the case with Iran," he explained. "No one complained even though a half-

billion-dollar export market was being closed off."

Stone urged the Russian grain embargo be terminated at once so that negotiations can begin on renewal of the five-year grain agreement which expires in September.

"As for trade with Iran, the initiative will have to come from them, but should they at some point wish to make cash purchases of rice, feed grain, vegetable oils or other foods, we should not close the door to such a request," he stated.

Stone maintained that U.S. food power strategy "should include a

revitalized Food for Peace Program, stressing humanitarian, economic aid and market development goals.

"Even if grain and food stocks become tight, a portion of our food resources should be earmarked for aid to food-deficit countries. We must not ignore famine and hunger in the needy countries — that would be the quickest way to push non-aligned nations into the Communist orbit," he added.

While the immediate motivation should be to alleviate famine and hunger, "it should not be overlooked that Food for Peace assistance has helped create markets for U.S. farm products," Stone continued.

There are 10 countries who are now billion-dollar customers for our farm exports," Stone ex-

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James Brown, Pennsylvania Farmers Union Advisory Committee Chairman poses with U.S. Agriculture Secretary John Block, left, during the NFU convention this week in Florida.



Among the delegates who heard an impressive group of speakers at the National Farmers Union convention in Florida this week were Margaret and Albert Bentz, Thomasville, York County.

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