



## A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

At its annual meeting in March, 1993, the Board of Directors of the Institute for Alternative Agriculture voted to rename the IAA the **Henry A. Wallace Institute for Alternative Agriculture**. It did so to honor the former Secretary of Agriculture's manifold contributions to agriculture and the longstanding support of the Institute by his daughter, Mrs. Jean Wallace Douglas.

To help our readers understand the timeliness and appropriateness of this decision, we asked Professor Don F. Hadwiger, a member of this publication's editorial board and a long-time student of agricultural history, to provide a perspective on the connections between the life and work of Henry A. Wallace and the purposes of the institution which now bears his name. Our thanks to Don Hadwiger for responding so eloquently to our request.

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# *Henry A. Wallace, champion of a durable agriculture*

America's farmers, over the years, have received and accepted much good advice about how to value their way of life, how to become more efficient producers, how to maintain prices and incomes, how to preserve the soil and the natural environment, and how to relate to other economic sectors and to farmers in other countries.

One continuing source of enlightened leadership during the past century has been four generations of the Wallace family, beginning with "Grandfather Henry" in the 19th century (Lord, 1947). The family of Wallaces have loved agriculture and respected farmers (they were farmers themselves). They have been thoughtful and farsighted. They have found ways to communicate with farmers, particularly through journals such as *Wallaces' Farmer*. In each era they have worked closely with the other farm leaders. Two of the Wallace's—Henry C., and his son Henry A.—became United States Secretaries of Agriculture.

Secretary Henry A. Wallace in particular created a "new" U.S. Department of Agriculture by adding economic, conservation, and food programs while reinvigorating agricultural research from the "old" department. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who named Wallace to the cabinet post, observed that the Department under Wallace became a model for efficient administration, and positioned itself for the emergencies resulting from depression and war, such as the need to provide food assistance to nations besieged by Hitler.

While others advising President Roosevelt focussed on problems of the day, Secretary Wallace was also envisioning ways to address new missions. Wallace, for example, was an exponent of reciprocal trade agreements as a way to increase agricultural markets and promote American prosperity. President Roosevelt, appreciating Wallace's vision, his outstanding record as an administrator, and his loyalty to New Deal principles, chose Wallace as his Vice Presidential nominee in 1940. No other Secretary of Agriculture has been so honored.

Henry A. Wallace envisioned a more enduring world, reborn from depression and war, which would fashion a more humane capitalism. Wallace stated several missions for government, especially in relation to agriculture: to help farmers gain spiritual as well as material rewards from their chosen occupation; to stabilize the agricultural economy; to provide an ever-normal granary that would keep food supplies in readiness for urgent need; to preserve the soil and other natural resources across America and throughout the world; and to increase and sustain food production worldwide in order to meet the needs of a massive human population (Schapsmeier and Schapsmeier, 1968).

Among these goals Wallace was always inclined to give first priority to spiritual and human concerns; but he was convinced that human civilizations lasted only so long as they treasured and protected the fragile natural environments of their agricultures.

Both idealist and realist, Wallace believed that farming provided a unique spiritual experience, and that rural society offered a