

# Correspondence

## International Food Stamps

To the Editors: The international food stamp proposal by William E. Colby ("Food Stamps for International Neighbors," *Worldview*, January/February) demonstrates—in the open domain—just how far the former head of the CIA is from either idealism or realism. From idealism: His main concerns seem to be to keep the unwashed of other cultures from penetrating U.S. shores; and second, to catalyze U.S. agroindustry.

From realism: The food stamp program has been subject to horrendous abuse, not just in the U.S., but also in Puerto Rico, where almost 70 per cent of the population "qualified" in 1976. Trading in stamps would be an immense boon to the entrepreneurs of various Third World countries—almost impossible to monitor from the U.S.—with

little trickle down effect to the poorest and neediest.

While it is desirable to improve nutrition in underdeveloped countries, external doles are not the answer. Instead, as in various Caribbean countries, they merely kill local initiative.

Finally, Colby's argument assumes that U.S. agricultural potential is virtually boundless—a premise that may be as atavistic as the earlier belief that U.S. energy resources were unlimited. A much sounder blend of idealism and realism may be found in Andrew Young's essay in the same issue of *Worldview*.

Walter C. Clemens, Jr.  
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William E. Colby Responds:

Mr. Clemens's comment seems to embody the same *Kto Kovo?*—"who's going to do in whom?"—premise he ascribes to the Soviet regime (see his article, "A Balance Sheet on Sixty Years of Soviet Foreign Policy" in the same issue). Far from a perverse "idealistic" effort to keep the "unwashed"—his word—from our shores, my article stressed the need to give them better lives both at home and here than they are receiving now or will receive if no better solution than ineffective border control is found. The article plainly looks to agricultural and labor-intensive light industry development as the long-term solution, but "realistically" focuses on the need for interim food stamp support during the years of their growth. The food stamp program has had considerable—albeit not total—success in helping meet the "realistic" needs of our poor, including those in Puerto Rico, and could be reasonably administered and policed with a cooperating Mexican Government. "Idealistically," the article suggests this is a better policy than paying subsidies to American farmers to cut back production as hungry and potentially desperate neighbors look on, while leaving to Mr. Clemens's Mexican "local initiative" the improvement of their nutrition. A little less *Kto Kovo?* and zero-sum analysis might lead to a bit more mutual gain.

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