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In Union Is Strength

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SEPTEMBER 29, 2006

TASK FORCE TO KILL THE CWB GETTING ATTENTION IT DESERVES

“Over the past week, the Conservative Task Force to kill the Wheat Board has been getting the attention it deserves,” says Stewart Wells, President of the National Farmers Union (NFU).

After much discussion about the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) in the House of Commons, the Agriculture Critic for the Official Opposition, Wayne Easter, said that the Task Force was totally discredited. Likewise, the New Democratic Agriculture Critic, Alex Atamanenko, called it the “Wheat Board Killing Task Force.”

On Wednesday, September 27, the *Winnipeg Free Press* reported that the two consultants appointed to the task force were being paid by the federal government to be there. Both these consultants have previously worked for the Alberta government, drawing up plans for dismantling the CWB. One of the consultants is a former employee of Saskatchewan Wheat Pool.

And now the Canadian Wheat Board has declined to sit on the task force. “This is the only decision the CWB could have taken,” stated Wells. “As an organization responsible to the farmers who control it, the CWB decision reflects the fact that farmers have not given any indication that they want to give up the grain marketing advantage of single desk selling.”

On the contrary, there is growing evidence they strongly support the CWB. Federal Agriculture Minister Chuck Strahl is now openly admitting that he is surprised by the “fire and fury” that he sees in western Canada over the issue (*Financial Post*, September 28, 2006). Wells said that western Canadian farmers understand the CWB delivers an additional \$800 million per year, over and above what they would receive from the grain trade alone, into their pockets. “I’m not at all surprised farmers don’t want to give that up,” concluded Wells. “After all, it’s their business, their board.”

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