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national farmers union

In Union Is Strength

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GOVERNMENT TASK FORCE AN AFFRONT TO FARMERS, SAYS NFU

The Conservative government is lying to farmers when it claims to be committed to a “strong, viable, voluntary Canadian Wheat Board (CWB),” says Stewart Wells, President of the National Farmers Union (NFU). The phrase was repeated in a government-issued press release announcing the creation of a Task Force designed to force farmers into a US-style grain marketing system.

The Conservative government is hiding behind rhetorical rubbish because it knows that the real objective – a US-style open market – simply can’t be sold to farmers. “Without its single desk selling powers, the CWB becomes, at best, a much, much weaker version of the old prairie Wheat Pools; farmers will lose market power and the grain giants will soon move in to destroy the pieces of the CWB the Conservatives leave,” Wells said.

The true marketing advantage of the CWB is the single desk. By removing the single desk, the Conservative plan gives Cargill and friends “market choice” – the choice to source grain in the disorganized Canadian market one day and from the Brazilians or US the next, each time playing farmers in one nation against those in the other.

Wells said the government is intent on turning the clock back to the unsuccessful voluntary CWB of the 1930s. “This new Conservative government is just recycling a failed, tired idea of the old Conservative government of R.B. Bennett,” he said.

Wells pointed out the current government is also lying when it states the CWB did not respond to the government’s invitation to participate in the Task Force. “Ken Ritter, Chair of the CWB, issued a letter on September 8 in response to the government’s initiative,” stated Wells. “The CWB asked a series of questions regarding the mandate, participants, process and timeline of the Task Force. The Conservative government’s misrepresentation of the facts is another malicious action against the CWB and the farmers of western Canada.”

The Task Force itself is much the same group that advised the Conservatives in July to get on with destroying the effectiveness of the CWB without “getting bogged down in the details.” Wells said the Task Force is comprised of a small collection of grain company shills and Bay Street consultants, because there isn’t a single credible farm organization that agrees with the Conservative government’s approach to this issue.

“By deliberately cutting farmers out of the loop and by timing this Task Force to interfere with the CWB Director election period, the Conservative government is allowing US-based multinationals to lead the way to a US-style open market,” concluded Wells. “It’s also showing its complete arrogance towards western Canadian farmers and disdain for the CWB Act itself. This isn’t marketing choice for farmers, this is marketing choice for Cargill and friends.”

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