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In Union Is Strength

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HARPERITES LIFT VEIL ON CWB FIGHT

The Harper government has lifted the veil on why it wants to destroy the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB), says Stewart Wells, President of the National Farmers Union (NFU).

“It always seemed odd that the Harper Conservatives admitted in court documents last summer that they had done absolutely no economic analysis of the impact of their Cabinet Order designed to destroy orderly marketing of barley,” stated Wells. “Last week, however, in statements made by Gerry Ritz, Harper’s new point man in charge of killing the CWB, their plan becomes much clearer.”

In a statement made during a news conference February 13 in Ottawa, ***Ritz claimed that the price of barley is too high.*** This will come as news to many grain producers, who have struggled through the worst ever income crisis over the last 20 years. After only 7 months of decent grain prices, the Harper government says that prices are too high and action must be taken to lower them. Ritz’s exact quote is: ***“But we’ve got a struggling livestock sector out there that needs a lot more barley in the ground, not less, to try and bring the price down.”***

Wells said the Harper Conservatives’ policy to destroy orderly marketing now has a context—lower grain prices. “The attacks on the Canadian Grain Commission (removing kernel visual distinguishability [KVD] and removing inward inspection), the destruction of Canada’s superior merit-based seed system, the destruction of public research and ownership, the destruction of the CWB’s moderating influence on railway excesses—all of this makes sense if you understand that the end goal is to lower grain prices.”

At his Ottawa news conference February 13, Ritz went on to say that anyone who does not support the Conservatives’ party line is part of “the tin foil hat and decoder ring crowd”.

“Not only are the Harper policies destructive, but each juvenile comment and name-calling episode from government people like Ritz is a new attack on basic democratic principles like public debate. This is a very negative period for democracy in Canada,” continued Wells.

Ritz’s comments were made in the run-up to the Federal Court Appeal hearing scheduled for next week in Winnipeg. “Even though the Harper Government lost the court battle

over their illegal Cabinet Order last summer, and even though they have announced in the House of Commons that they will introduce legislation to destroy the CWB's marketing advantage, they still insist on wasting valuable taxpayers' money and judge's time on the appeal process. This is irresponsible government," concluded Wells.

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