



Farmers launch court challenge over government move to strip CWB of barley; NFU takes lead role

“The issue we’re dealing with is, at its highest level, the transfer of a multi-billion dollar a year industry. Barley is being transferred from a farmer-controlled entity to the private sector. This privatization is a change of enormous proportions. Farmers lose control of their marketing agency and they lose the benefits that come with control of their markets. The barley move is just the first of the already-announced steps to systematically dismantle the Canadian Wheat Board,” so began lawyer Anders Bruun at a June 11 Winnipeg news conference announcing a legal action by farmers against the government of Canada.

Bruun explained to reporters that he would soon be filing papers with the Federal Court. The case will challenge the legality of the government’s recently-passed Order-in-Council that amends regulations pertaining to CWB barley marketing—effectively terminating the CWB’s single-desk barley marketing advantage.

The legal action lists 13 applicants: one organization, the Friends of the Canadian Wheat Board, and 12 farmers: Harold Bell, Arthur Hadland, Art Macklin, Lynn Jacobson, Ken Eshpeter, Terry Boehm, Lyle Simonson, Stewart Wells, Bill Woods, Wilf Harder, Ken Sigurdson, and Keith Ryan. The Friends of the Canadian Wheat Board is an umbrella organization of farmers, farm organizations, and other Canadians who support a democratic, farmer-controlled CWB. Organizations such as the NFU and Real Voice for Choice are active within Friends of the CWB.

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Ontario Ministry of Agriculture violating its Public Trust; NFU asks Ombudsman to investigate

On June 12, the NFU in Ontario filed a complaint with the province’s Ombudsman. The NFU is asking the Ombudsman to investigate Ontario’s Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) and associated agencies. The NFU is asserting that OMAFRA is failing to live up to its public trust: not only is OMAFRA failing to deliver the food safety, environmental protection, sustainability, and family farm protection outcomes citizens want, OMAFRA’s policies are moving our food and agriculture systems in the *opposite* direction.

Recently, in an investigation of Ontario Lottery Corporation, Ontario Ombudsman André Marin criticized the agency for failing to protect the public interest and for violating its public trust. The Lottery Corporation had failed to investigate widespread evidence of retailer fraud.

In a similar way, OMAFRA is failing to protect the public’s vital interests in the food and agriculture system. Further, while there is broad consensus among citizens regarding the outcomes to which Ontario food and agriculture policy should be aimed, OMAFRA is ignoring that consensus and proceeding in a different direction.

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As part of the news conference, Bruun was joined by farmers Butch Harder and Lynn Jacobson, NFU President Stewart Wells (by phone tie-in), and Bob Roehle, who has been working on a volunteer basis to provide support services for farmers working to safeguard the CWB.

Bruun, a partner in Winnipeg firm Campbell Marr, formerly served as general counsel to the Canadian Wheat Board (1984 to 1992) and as general counsel to Manitoba Pool Elevators (1992 to 1998). Like today, in 1993 the federal government used an Order-in-Council to remove part of the CWB's jurisdiction over barley marketing, creating the so-called Continental Barley Market. Bruun was part of the legal team employed in 1993 by the three Prairie Pools that won a court challenge against the federal government. The 1993 court victory terminated the Continental Barley Market experiment and fully restored the CWB's jurisdiction over barley.

Three strikes

The essence of the current court challenge is this: Minister Strahl's Cabinet Order has three strikes against it: it is unlawful, it is undemocratic, and the dual market it advances is unsustainable.

Strahl's Order-in-Council is unlawful because the termination of the CWB's barley marketing mandate he proposes cannot be made by Cabinet Order. Under Section 47.1 of the *Canadian Wheat Board Act*, such changes require legislative amendments passed in Parliament. The central focus of the court challenge will be the question of whether it is legal to take barley out of Board jurisdiction through a Cabinet Order, or whether such a change requires Parliamentary legislation. "The government is not following the law as established by Parliament," said Bruun.

Strahl's actions to terminate the CWB's single-desk barley marketing advantage are undemocratic. Under Section 47.1 of the *CWB Act*, before a grain can be removed from CWB jurisdiction, not only must the current legislation be amended in Parliament by democratically-elected MPs, but the

introduction of legislation must be preceded by consultation with the CWB's Board of Directors and a *fair and transparent vote by barley producers*. The government has not yet held such a vote. It was clear from the outset that Strahl's "consultation process" was designed to deliver a predetermined result. His process began with a closed meeting of known anti-CWB individuals and ended with a flawed producer plebiscite which omitted safeguards essential for a fair and transparent vote: publicly-scrutinized voters' lists and vote counts, controls on third party spending, a secret ballot, and a clear question. Parliament, under the direction of the Liberal government in 1998, handed control of the CWB over to farmers. Since coming to power in 2006, the Conservative minority government has systematically undermined farmer control of the CWB and replaced it with partisan political control.

Strahl's Order-in-Council creates a voluntary CWB—something that is completely unsustainable. Strahl's dual market or "market choice environment" which his Order-in-Council is supposed to create—and which he offered to farmers in his plebiscite—is designed to fail. History has conclusively demonstrated that a voluntary Wheat Board is unworkable and financially unsustainable. Past experiments with voluntary price pooling have resulted in taxpayers being left to cover millions of dollars in losses. Minister Strahl has not provided farmers with any analysis or a business plan on how his "dual market" would work. Further, it is likely that Strahl knows his plan will eventually flounder. But the S.S. Dual Market only needs to float long enough for wheat to be loaded aboard along side of barley, and for the whole thing to sail out of sight of the dock.

Another key reason for the legal challenge is this: unless he is stopped, Strahl's moves against barley will be quickly followed by similar moves against wheat. The loss of the CWB's wheat and barley marketing advantages will cost a typical

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NFU hires Coordinator for international work

The international work of the NFU received a major boost at the end of March when the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) granted two-year funding to the NFU's international program in response to a proposal submitted a few months earlier. The funding allows for a 4/5ths staff position to coordinate the NFU's international work as well as the opportunity to host two international delegations in Canada to hold a series of events focused on building sustainable food systems.

Inter Pares continues to support our international work as well and the NFU would

like to thank them for providing the funding necessary for leveraging a CIDA grant.

The NFU hired Martha Robbins to fill the new International Coordinator position at the beginning of May. She has previously served as NFU Youth President and has extensive experience with La Via Campesina and the NFU's international program. She can be reached at National Office Monday to Thursday or by email at robbins@nfu.ca.

Watch for regular updates on the NFU's international work in the *Union Farmer Quarterly* and *Monthly*.

— nfu—

OUR BOARD OUR BUSINESS

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Why Farmers Support the Canadian Wheat Board edited by Terry Pugh & Darrell McLaughlin

Published by
FERNWOOD PUBLISHING www.fernwoodpublishing.ca
NATIONAL FARMERS UNION www.nfu.ca

Available April 2007
order from the NFU
2717 Wentz Ave., Saskatoon, SK
306-652-9465
(\$14.95 plus \$2 s&h)
also available at your
local bookstore or contact
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The central purpose of this book is to help farmers and non-farmers better understand the essential role of the Canadian Wheat Board in the lives of western grain producers and their communities, and the Canadian economy. The need for such an understanding has been made all the more urgent by Prime Minister Harper's neo-liberal open market agenda which will guarantee corporate domination of Canadian grains. This book, sets out the context, operational mechanism and role of the CWB, making the case for its economic, social and political value.

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prairie grain farm \$10,000 to \$20,000 per year. And if the CWB goes, supply management becomes much more vulnerable.

The court challenge—and advertising, expert witnesses, and travel costs—will cost many tens-of-thousands of dollars. NFU members have been extraordinarily generous in helping fund this action. Members have donated thousands of dollars so far. The NFU extends its deep appreciation to the family farm members who have contributed. These contributions made possible swift action on this court challenge and, we hope, decisive action to safeguard the CWB. Shortly after the challenge was announced, the Saskatchewan and Manitoba governments announced they too would make a financial contribution. Farmers welcome any and all financial support offered, as it serves as a counterweight to the hundreds of thousands of dollars that the federal government has spent advertising its position.

More information on the court challenge, including the court submissions and other legal documents, are available at www.friendsofcwb.ca .

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GLOBALIZATION and the POWER OF PEASANTS

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Published by Fernwood Publishing
www.fernwoodpublishing.ca

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— Nettie Wiebe

Renewable fuels?

Advocates of ethanol and biodiesel like to call their products “renewable fuels.” These fuels are, admittedly, renewable, but are they sustainable? The distinction is critical.

At one time, the houses of Europe and America were lit, largely, by biofuels. A vast industry existed to hunt and slaughter whales, cut up their flesh, and squeeze out a flammable lamp oil. Whale oil production rose rapidly during the first half of the 1800s, peaked around 1850, then fell off rapidly as whales became increasingly scarce. The whale oil industry was largely finished by the late-1800s.

Whales, as a biofuel source, were renewable—whales could reproduce and maintain their numbers, under a certain range of conditions. But the *rate* at which we harvested that renewable resource was unsustainable—our sources of whale oil could not renew themselves as fast as we chose to extract that resource.

Similarly (though a food issue rather than energy), our harvest of cod, a renewable resource, was not sustainable. All renewable resources—food, energy, fibre, etc.—become unsustainable at some point as our rate of consumption increases.

Wood is a renewable fuel, the original biofuel. The owner of a small cabin in a forest clearing could harvest and burn wood for heat and never degrade the surrounding forest. Perhaps the same is true of a small village. But you couldn't fuel modern civilization with wood without very quickly creating an Easter Island landscape. In fact, the transition from a wood-fuelled European civilization to a coal-fuelled one was spurred, primarily, by deforestation and wood shortages that resulted from the vast quantities of fuel needed for iron smelting.

Petroleum is a renewable fuel; the Earth creates a bit more each year. And petroleum use could even be sustainable, under certain conditions—if we pumped it more slowly than the biological and geological processes of the Earth renewed it.

In very rough figures, our petroleum supply was created during various periods over the past 500 million years. We will use up the bulk of it, however, over a 100-odd year period stretching, very roughly, from 1940 to 2060. The period in which petroleum was created is about 5 million times longer than the period in which we will use it up. Thus, our renewable petroleum supply could be a sustainable petroleum supply if our extraction rate was approximately one-five-millionth as rapid as it is now.

Ethanol and biodiesel are, certainly, renewable fuels. Plants renew themselves, growing every year from seeds, water, nutrients, and sunshine. One can imagine walking to a stand of corn, taking a bit of the seed, and making ethanol in a process fuelled by wood from a field-edge bluff of trees. Backwoods moonshiners and their stills produced their ethanol just this way. In such a scenario, corn-ethanol would be renewable *and* sustainable.

The problem is that as scale and rate of production increase, sustainable renewable processes become unsustainable. Early forestry, whale oil harvesting, and ethanol production were all sustainable. As these activities expanded, intensified, and accelerated, all became unsustainable.

Large-scale (and even medium-scale) renewable fuel production is unsustainable. This is partly because it is built atop, and draws from, our unsustainable food production system. Our food supply—now scaled up to feed 6.5 billion people and their livestock—is increasingly a product of fossil fuels. Nitrogen fertilizer, the main feedstock for our

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“The public trust between Ontario citizens and OMAFRA is that the former trusts the latter to manage our food and agriculture systems to deliver health-enhancing food; employment and prosperity; thriving, multigenerational family farms; a clean and flourishing environment; sustainable production; fertile soils; and vibrant rural communities and economies. The ongoing farm crisis, a building rural crisis, the unprecedented expulsion of young farmers, food safety scares, a proliferation of environmental threats, and growing indications that our food production system is unsustainable all highlight the fact that OMAFRA is failing in its public trust,” said Grant Robertson, National Farmers Union Coordinator in Ontario.

As one example of the chasm between the expectations of Ontario citizens and the results of OMAFRA policies, the NFU letter to the Ombudsman cited the accelerating expulsion of young farmers. The letter said:

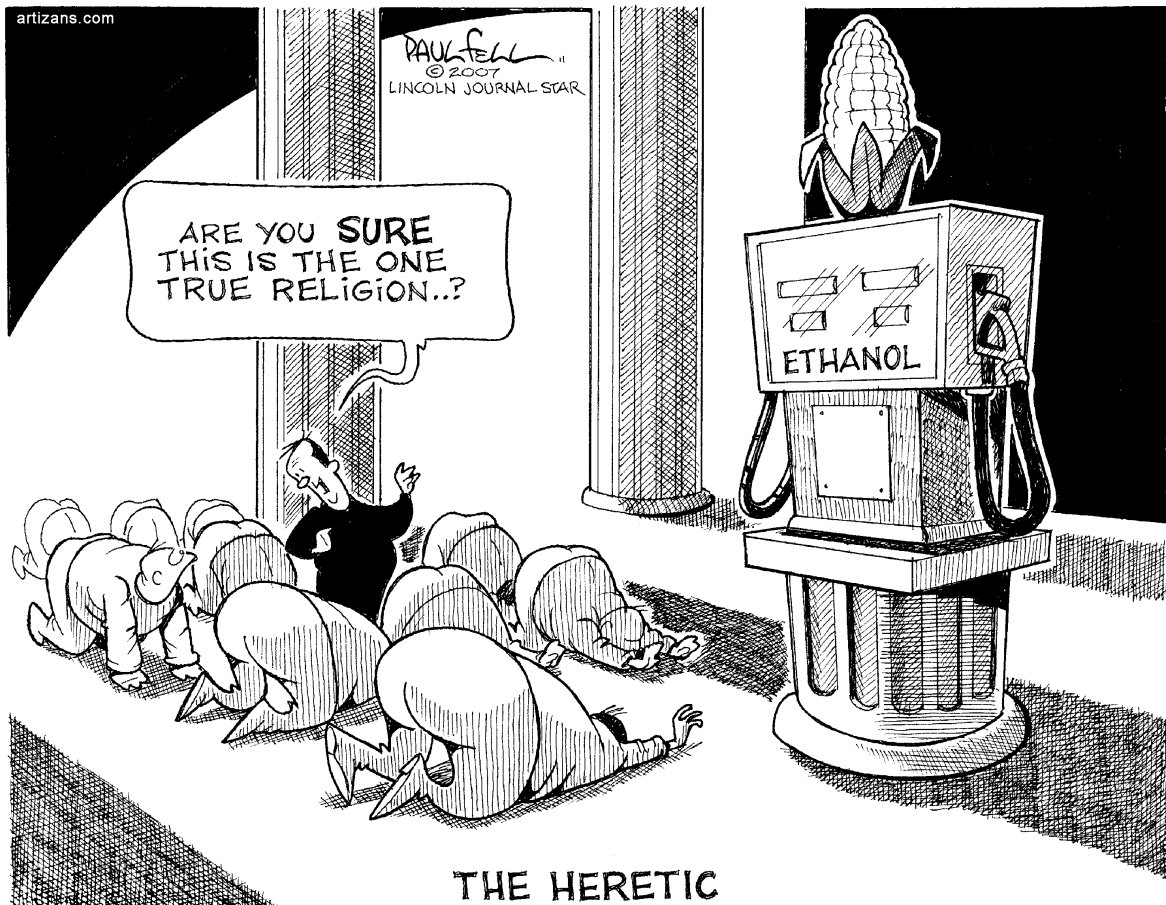
Citizens want food produced by family farmers who are financially secure on intergenerational farms. Further, citizens believe that the ability of young farmers to make sustainable livings in agriculture is key to the long-term sustainability of our food system.

In contrast, young farmers are being pushed out at an unprecedented rate; the intergenerational family farm that has been the basis of food production in Ontario for over 250 years is disintegrating. The 1991 Census of Agriculture recorded 18,440 farmers in Ontario under the age of 35. The 2006 Census recorded only 7,070—a drop of 62%!

This rate of decline among young farmers, if left unremedied, will lead Ontario family farms over a demographic cliff; if there are no young farmers, the inescapable outcome is a precipitous drop in the number of farms within a generation. That OMAFRA policies should have driven tens-of-thousands of young farmers off their families’ farms is perhaps the most telling, and damning, indicator of the vast divergence between the Ministry’s policies and the expectations of Ontario citizens.

The NFU, in its letter, asked the Ombudsman to launch an immediate investigation of OMAFRA. The NFU will follow up in coming weeks with a detailed report that shows that, on nearly every count, OMAFRA is not just failing Ontario’s farmers and rural communities, but it is failing every citizen of Ontario.

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THE HERETIC

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foodstuffs, is created directly from fast-depleting natural gas (see box at end of this article). Gas provides the feedstock chemicals as well as the energy to drive the reactions that make nitrogen fertilizer. Similarly, our farm chemicals are made primarily from fossil fuels. Likewise, our processing and distribution systems run on fossil fuels. The fossil fuel inputs into our meals are huge. We are, as many have observed, eating oil. Thus, as goes oil, so goes our food supply. And so goes our supply of grain and oilseeds from which to make ethanol and biodiesel.

The problems with the sustainability of our food supply do not end with fossil fuels: As we move from our current population of 6.5 billion people toward a probable 9.5 billion, we are encountering limits to our irrigation water supply. We are drawing down fossil aquifers. Our water use is unsustainable, and it will become even more so as we move to increase food production for humans by 50%.

We are losing soil to erosion and cropland to urban sprawl, salination, and desertification. Our use of the Earth's soils is probably unsustainable.

Thus, if the energy and fertility sources of our food supply are unsustainable, if our use of soil and water is unsustainable, we can be pretty sure that the food system overall is currently unsustainable. It naturally follows that any corn or soybean or canola biofuel source taken out of that food supply will be similarly unsustainable—renewable, but unsustainable; think whale oil.

In the face of such chilling facts about our food and grain supplies, biofuel proponents often stage a tactical retreat and begin talking about cellulosic ethanol—ethanol made from the fibrous cellulose found in wood and straw. The idea here is to take wood chips and crop waste and to turn them into fuel with the help of exotic processes or yet-to-be-discovered bacteria. It's not a bad idea to turn wood waste into usable fuel. And we can even imagine that it could be sustainable to capture the sawdust and chips

currently rotting in heaps around a sawmill and use them to create a bit of ethanol. Where such a scheme becomes unsustainable is when we pretend that we could replace a significant part of our global motor fuel supply with ethanol derived from wood or straw.

Such a scheme would require removing megatonnes of plant materials from the land. This plant material would then be vaporized, along with the nutrients it contains. Removing those nutrients, however, will only make our unsustainable food system even less sustainable. If you remove the straw, you remove the raw material for tomorrow's soil. You also accelerate wind and water erosion. Running the global car fleet, even partly, on energy extracted from the land will deplete that land. We will replace the problem of Peak Oil with one of Peak Soil. By depleting our soils as well as our fuel sources, we will reduce, not only the capacity of future civilizations to fuel themselves, but also even to feed themselves. Biofuels made from unsustainably produced grains, oilseeds, or cellulosic feedstocks mean using tomorrow's food to make today's fuel.

When thinking about so-called renewable fuels, the bottom line is this: Sources of renewable energy are plentiful—wood, whales, cow dung, a horse fuelled by a bale of hay and a handful of oats. Sources of sustainable energy are *much* rarer. Moreover, it is almost certain that there are no sustainable ways to fuel this civilization. That is true simply because the energy draw of this civilization is too large relative to the capacity of the Earth to create usable energy. Further, our energy use is too large relative to the Earth's capacity to re-integrate the emissions from that energy conversion back into the biosphere—instead, the energy conversion by-products accumulate.

The lie implicit in the promises made by biofuel proponents is that their energy fixes are not only renewable but also sustainable. They are not. Using such fuels will empty the Earth of resources and fill the atmosphere with bi-products. Using such products will degrade the very possibility of our

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grandchildren and their grandchildren living lives as comfortable as ours. Biofuels, like all unsustainable energy sources, benefit the present at the expense of the future.

The major questions surrounding biofuels are neither technical nor economic, they are ethical. —ntu—

Natural gas: fuelling our food

To a significant extent, the Green Revolution was a project to make our food plants more responsive to fossil-fuel derived fertilizers. The project worked: where once we fed one billion people (1800) or two billion (early 1900s), we now feed 6.6 billion, and we are on our way to attempting to feed 9.5 billion.

But our natural gas supplies—and thus our fertility and food supplies—are limited. And those limits will be soonest and most painfully felt in North America.

British Petroleum (BP) is one of the world's largest energy companies. It is also a respected source of information about global energy supplies. BP's recent publication *BP Statistical Review of World Energy 2007* (June 2007) reveals that North America is quickly running out of gas, and that the rest of the world may only be a generation behind.

Natural gas production in both Canada and the United States has peaked. Production has been falling since 2001 in the US and since 2002 in Canada. Further, these production declines have come amid massive increases in drilling. Canada drilled 4,000 new wells in 1996, 11,000 new wells in 2001, 14,000 wells in 2003, and 16,000 wells in 2005. Despite this increasing rate of drilling, production is declining.

Also, despite accelerating drilling, we're not finding gas as quickly as we're using it up. In 1986, Canada's proved reserves of natural gas were 2.75 trillion cubic metres. In 1996, they were 1.94 trillion. Today, they are 1.67 trillion. Canada's reserves/production ratio (the amount of proved reserves divided by annual production) is 8.9. Among the nations that produce natural gas, Canada's R/P ratio puts it near the bottom. By comparison, the world R/P ratio is 63.3. In terms of natural gas, Canada is quickly becoming a "have not" country.

It's hard to know just when the crunch will come. Already fertilizer and chemical companies are leaving North America, moving to where natural gas is, for now, cheap and plentiful. Despite some uncertainty, however, it is probable that sometime within the next two decades natural gas supply shortages in Canada and North America will become critical. We won't be "out", but production will fall far below consumption.

The biggest factor in Canada's natural gas supply situation is that we are exporting nearly 60% of our annual production to the US. This effectively increases our "consumption" 2½-fold.

Canada's exports of natural gas to the US are massive, both in absolute terms, and relative to our remaining supplies. The Canada-to-US flow is the second-largest in the world. Canada exports 99.75 billion cubic metres per year, this compares to Russian exports to the EU of 131 billion cubic metres per year. But Russia has an R/P ratio of 77.8—nine times that of Canada. In terms of annual exports as a percentage of total reserves, no major exporter matches Canada. We're liquidating our natural gas resources faster than any other major producer.

The blowout of the Canadian natural gas supply in two generations at rock-bottom prices is the biggest public policy error in Canadian history. We are one of the coldest nations on Earth, and natural gas is our primary heating fuel. Gas is the main source of fertility for our hundred-million acres of cropland. Further, our unmatched depletion rate is entirely voluntary: we are not using up our gas ourselves for important purposes: we are selling it off. And, possibly most egregious, we are selling it cheap and using our modest royalty revenues to fuel an economic boom wherein we are buying bigger TVs and building bigger houses. Ironically, those houses will become very hard to heat.

We'll need to heat our homes and fertilize our crops for centuries. Our gas will be gone in decades. We are using our royalty revenues, not to research alternative sources of heat or fertility, but to fund binge buying of recreational vehicles and espresso machines. Our handing of our natural gas resource represents a massive failure on the part of citizens and political leaders.

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Some fuzzy thinking in America about biofuels

“Our policies should be targeted to replace hydrocarbons with carbohydrates”

—Senator Richard Lugar,
March 13, 2006

For the 10,000 years preceding the 19th and 20th Centuries, our civilizations were powered by carbohydrates; human and draft animal muscles turned those carbohydrates into ploughing and planting, building and walking, digging and cutting.

Some societies today continue to run largely on carbohydrates—people walk, they hoe their fields or use oxen, cook their foods with wood, lift their water from wells with buckets and ropes, build their shelters from local wood, use clay containers rather than glass or plastic, and often light their houses with candles.

In America and elsewhere in the affluent world, things are quite different.

None of this is to say that the US’s hydrocarbon-fueled society is superior to a carbohydrate-fueled economy of a remote Asian village, just that the two are different. In fact, climate change and oil depletion may force us to accept the superior sustainability of the cultures that rely more on carbohydrates. Nevertheless, Lugar, and other senators bent on diverting the world’s food stream into SUV tanks must accept that while fueling a society with carbohydrates is possible, fuelling an *American-style* society that way is fantasy. To a significant extent, the affluent, suburban, mega-house car-culture of America is a product of the massive

hydrocarbon energies that pulse through it. It is delusional to think that we can maintain our massively energy dependant culture and fuel it using 17th and 18th Century fuel sources. It is not enough to change fuel supplies, we must change the core structures and processes of our civilization.

“America’s addiction to foreign oil poses a clear and present danger to our national security. Fortunately, one of the best solutions to ending this addiction lies right here in the Hawkeye state. Iowa is leading the way in producing ethanol and biodiesel that can end our dependence on foreign oil.”

—Senator Tom Harkin,
July 10, 2006

America can end its dependence on foreign oil, or it can maintain its growth-based car culture, it cannot do both.

The US has been a net crude oil importer in all but nine of the past 95 years. The US imported oil in 1950s, ’60s, and ’70s when US oil reserves were large and its production increasing. Today, US oil reserves are largely used up and America’s production has been falling for two decades, even as its use has soared.

The US now depends on foreign sources for 66% of its oil needs, up from 58% in 2000 when President Bush took office. The project of getting the US off imported oil is not so much a problem of production as one of consumption.

— nfu —

NFU critical of Ontario Minister

The list of errors and mishandled issues at the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture continues to grow. In June, the Minister announced the development of a risk management program pilot project. Ontario NFU Coordinator Grant Robertson criticized the Ministers go-slow approach, the lack of details, and the fact that the government has left the farmer-created Risk Management Plan gather dust on the shelf for two years while farm losses mounted.

“Farmers and at least two of Ontario’s general farm organizations—the NFU and CFFO—placed a clear and thoughtful plan in front of the Minister. It has been there for two years. What, exactly, is not good enough for this government that further delay is necessary? Two years is an awfully long time to wait for this non-decision,” said Robertson in a June 11 news release.

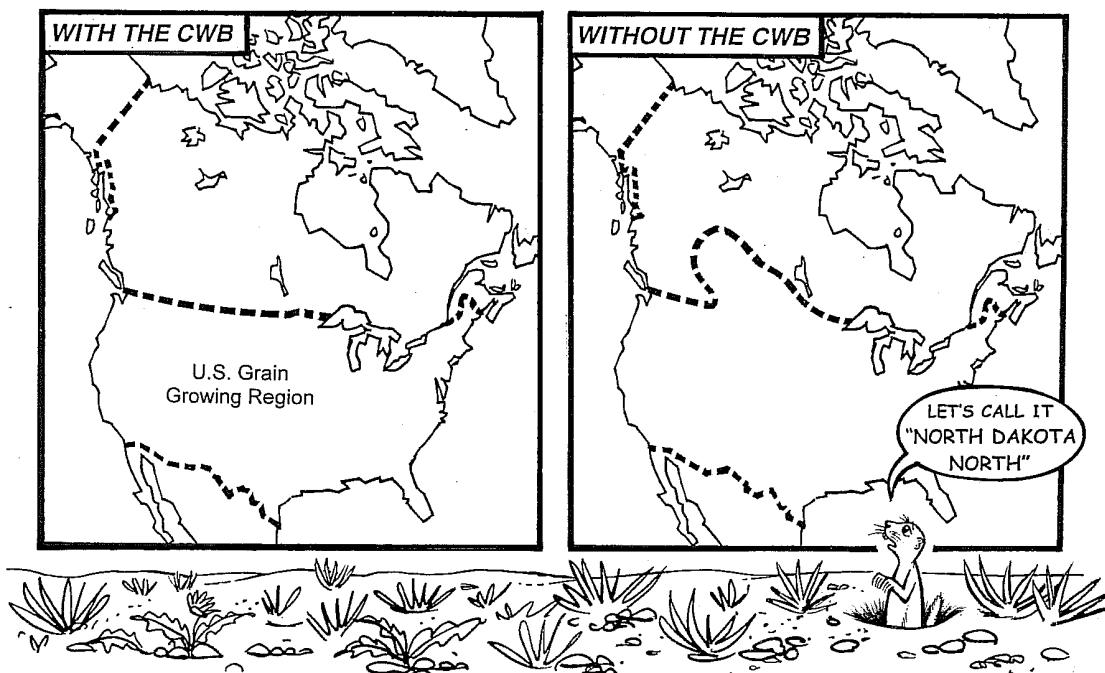
Compounding the mishandling of this issue, the Minister announced that she would be developing the governments new risk management plan “with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and representatives of the grain and oilseed sector,” explicitly excluding the NFU

and other organizations. “There are three general farm organizations in Ontario. The Minister has gone out of her way to make it clear who she thinks is a friend of government and worthy of her attention. It is not only a shocking action but should call into question the Minister’s tenure in her position,” said Robertson.

He stated that these latest blunders come on top of a long list of costly errors, including failure to deal with farmers’ concerns with Agricorp, using the Minister’s position to raise re-election funds, failure to address the growing demographic crisis in primary food production in Ontario, and an unwillingness to present meaningful solutions to the farm income crisis in Ontario.

“The government is not providing effective leadership to a farm community facing financial crisis. Its gaffs, misjudgments, and photo-op re-announcements continue to mount. These latest two are just the most recent, and the most serious, in a long list. The need is critical for an effective Minister. How can farmers have confidence in a Minister that is not seeking input from all farm organizations and deliberately turns her back on a significant number of Ontario’s farmers? The National Farmers Union can see no alternative but to ask the Premier to replace her,” said Robertson. — nfu—

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**Remember, to save on your FNA membership,
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Farmers demand food sovereignty and agrarian reform: Rural Development conference in Brazil

The following is from a Via Campesina ally in Germany. The Via Campesina is a world-wide movement of peasants, farmers, rural women, indigenous peoples, and migrant and rural workers. The NFU is a founding member of the Via Campesina.

Rural communities are facing a dramatic crisis. All over the world, in poor countries as well as in so-called developed countries, small-scale family farmers are forced to leave the countryside because they can't access land, seeds, water or credit and because they can't sell their products on the local markets at fair prices. As a result, out of the 854 million hungry people in the world, two-thirds are rural workers, small-scale family farmers, and indigenous people. Free-trade and privatization policies implemented for more than twenty years under the name of rural development have a huge responsibility in this current crisis. Transforming agrarian resources into commodities is not in the interest of the poor. It only benefits the well-off and the transnational companies which—with the help of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization—have taken over our land, our water, our seeds, and now our knowledge.

This must change!

We do not believe that technology itself can be the solution. So-called Green revolution and GMOs will only increase the concentration of resources in the hands of a few corporations. These “solutions” are promoted by those who do not want to see any real change in the current unfair sharing of resources.

Instead, we (rural workers, landless people, small-scale family farmers, indigenous people, men and women from Africa, Latin America, Europe, North America and Asia) demand food sovereignty and agrarian reform.

Food sovereignty is the right of peoples and countries (or unions of states) to define their agricultural and food policies safe from third-

country dumping of food products. It includes the right for all countries, in the North as well as in the South, to protect their market (through tariff or non-tariff barriers), as well as the prioritization of local agricultural production over export-oriented agriculture. For this, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and all other bilateral and bi-regional free-trade agreements must get out of agriculture.

Food sovereignty cannot be separated from a genuine agrarian reform which must guarantee family farmers, indigenous people, pastoralists, landless people, and rural workers effective access to, and control over, the natural and productive resources that we need in order to fully realize our human rights. We are against the privatization of land, water, seeds, and knowledge, and we defend the social use of these resources.

Women and men must have equal right to access productive resources. The role of women in rural development has to be fully recognized. It is also particularly important for the future of sustainable family farming to develop mechanisms that ensure access to land and other agrarian resources for young people.

The International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD) that was held in March 2006 in Porto Alegre, Brazil, made a substantial contribution to the current debate on agrarian reform and rural development.

The Final Declaration recognizes key elements such as the need to support traditional and family farming, the need to redistribute land and other agrarian resources in a context of high concentration, the importance of local and national markets, the need to strengthen the role of the State to develop and implement fairer and people-

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centered agricultural policies, and the role of peasants' organizations in defining agricultural policies.

We, thus, demand that from now on rural development policies and programs be based on the ICARRD Final Declaration and on the principles of international cooperation respectful of citizen's and nation's sovereignty.

Finally, we call for the strengthening of strategic alliances between peasants' organizations and the

other sectors of our society in order to achieve sustainable and fair rural development. Food sovereignty is a right for all people. It is also our common responsibility!

No to all free trade agreements!

It's time for food sovereignty!

Let's globalize struggles, let's globalize hope!

La Via Campesina in Berlin,

17th of June 2007



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Higher grain prices = higher food prices?

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Corn prices are up 70%. Feed barley prices are up similarly. As are wheat prices. Two years ago, Minneapolis wheat was trading at \$3.50 (US); now it's at \$6.00 (US). This is good news for farmers (it would be great news if fertilizer prices weren't also up sharply).

With grain prices rising, we're seeing reports of rising food prices. Business reporters have already coined the term "agflation" to denote rising living costs driven, at least partly, by rising food costs. The funny thing is, talk of higher grain prices leading to higher food prices is a load of B.S.

For starters, grain prices aren't high. Take wheat as an example. Between 1945 and 1985, the inflation-adjusted price of wheat never fell below \$8/ bushel. In 1974, the inflation-adjusted price topped \$21/bushel! Since 1985, however, the price has languished around \$5. Adjusted for inflation, even with recent increases, the price of wheat has rarely been lower. (See left hand graph, below).

Let's compare wheat and bread. The price of bread is now \$2/loaf. Adjusted for inflation, the price in the mid- to late-'70s averaged over \$1.75 per loaf—not much different. But that late-1970s, that bread was being made from wheat priced, in today's dollars, between \$10 and \$20/bushel. The point? They made \$2/loaf bread out of \$15/bushel wheat then, they can do it now. Canadians shouldn't need to pay more for bread until wheat prices are triple their current level. — nfu—

