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Urban and Mary Laughlin of Prince Edward Island were delegates to the 39th NFU National Convention in Saskatoon. The Laughlins are Founding Members of the NFU, and Urban has attended every National Convention since 1969.

(photo by Stella Shepard)

A Note from the Editor

The NFU's 39th annual national convention held recently in Saskatoon was a positive experience not only for delegates and visitors, but also for many of the guest speakers. NFU conventions are gatherings

- BY TERRY PUGH

where knowledge, insight and experience are shared in equal measure. A few of the presentations are summarized in this issue, but due to a lack of space some of the other speakers' comments won't be published until the next issue in the spring. There are, however, high-quality audio **CDs available of all the proceedings, and you can order them by filling out the form on page 23.** There are also four speakers whose presentations are available on video DVDs: **Raj Patel, Judy Rebick, Bob Kingston and Darrin Qualman.** **To order a DVD, please see the ad on page 18.** You can also listen to the presentations by logging on to the NFU web page (www.nfu.ca) and clicking on the link to "National Convention".

There's good news and bad news on the Canadian Wheat Board front these days. The really good news is that four of five pro-single desk candidates were elected to the CWB Board of Directors in the recent elections in even-numbered districts on the prairies. Pro-CWB incumbent Directors Bill Toews and Rod Flaman were returned to the CWB Board, where they'll be joined by new pro-CWB Directors Cam Goff and Bill Woods. This election clearly shows that farmers strongly support the CWB single desk. The Harper government, for its part, pulled out all the stops in its efforts to sway the vote – including going so far as to mail out letters endorsing anti-CWB candidates – using Parliamentary letterhead. The letters were addressed specifically to voters and all the evidence suggests the Conservative MPs used the CWB voters list, which is a confidential document. At press time, the CWB Election Coordinator was investigating the incident.

The bad news is that even though farmers endorsed the CWB single desk in the election, the World Trade Organization has now, once again, targeted the CWB single desk for elimination. The agriculture text currently under discussion at the WTO trade talks in Geneva singles out the CWB single desk. The trade deal also contains provisions which would seriously hurt the supply-managed sectors like dairy and eggs by allowing increased imports into Canada. This deal, however, was not signed in December, 2008, and that gives farmers additional time to speak out against it.

—nfu—

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We believe a strong rural community in Canada is an essential part of our national culture. In the National Farmers Union, we work collectively to strengthen the farm community by: building ties between farmers in all parts of Canada, with farmers in other countries and with non-farm people; ensuring all people have access to an adequate, nutritious and safely-produced food supply; promoting equity for women and young people in the farming community; promoting social support systems that permit people in farming communities a good quality of life; promoting the development and maintenance of a Canadian infrastructure to serve Canadian goals in food production and trade; and helping governments to form fair and constructive policies related to food production and food trade.



A message from the...

President

- BY STEWART WELLS

Thanks to everyone that made our 39th Annual Convention in Saskatoon a success. Our NFU and guest speakers were the catalysts for many great conversations and new ideas.

Worldwide economic volatility has increased dramatically over the past few months. Governments must now make a choice—either they continue with more of the same policies that created the economic uncertainties, or they must choose a new direction. Naturally the agents that brought us unprecedented corporate consolidation and control want to move quickly to enhance their own positions. And this leads us right back to the Doha round of the World Trade Organization (WTO) talks.

If there ever was a “Night of the Living Dead” round of WTO talks, Doha would surely be it. Led by Pascal Lamy and his magic wand (a prop he used in Hong Kong in 2005), the same old corporate zombies are back again and wailing for more—more destruction of farmer controlled marketing agencies, more dismantling of anything and everything that might be considered a public good.

The trade zombies continue to mouth the same old untruths despite the twenty years of evidence we see around us. We are experiencing the rush to the bottom that we worried about at the end of the 1980s. Instead of trade being used to enhance economies (good), trade is being used to replace economies (bad), and the result is world-wide economic uncertainty which will be followed by more political uncertainty. The undead trade-mongers are past being able to understand that it is called the World Trade Organization, and not the World Income Organization, for a reason.

Switching gears, at this year’s convention we were able to announce our seventh consecutive

membership increase. This is great news for the NFU family. But many of our family members in the Maritimes are really hurting. Cattle and livestock prices have been poor for everyone, but many potato farmers have had a heart-breaking year. A wet growing season and an even wetter harvest have cost our members millions of dollars. The NFU will be pushing hard on behalf of these farm families as we move into the new year.

All the best for the holiday season, and looking forward to seeing you in Ottawa for our 40th birthday party next November,

Stewart Wells

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A message from the...

Women's President

- BY COLLEEN ROSS

Greetings NFU executive, board, members and friends. Please accept my sincere apologies for not being able to participate in this year's convention. I attended my first national convention weeks after becoming a member of the NFU, and have not missed a convention since. This year, pressing family needs dictate that I must be in Halifax rather than Saskatoon at this time.

Never-the-less, I am with you in spirit and know that this year's convention will be both productive and educational.

Over the past 12 months since we were last together in London Ontario we have experienced some disturbing global crisis. First and foremost on my mind is the world's acknowledgement of the global food shortage and the resulting food crisis. This is a situation that could have been avoided. The transnational corporations and governments that aided the demise of our food systems are now offering solutions - more of the same - the high toxic input, environmentally damaging, globalized food production and distribution model. We continue to offer better solutions.

The good news is that there are good things happening around the world and here at home where local food systems are being built and restored. And, women are leading the way. Young women are also entering into a model of farming that is focused on local production for local consumption.

My work this year has focused on these small local bio-diverse production systems.

In March of this year I traveled to Pais Vasco in Northern Spain to participate in the Biodiversity Commission meetings there. The focus was on climate change, seeds and hunger. Through La Via Campesina, and with the support and input of the NFU, we are making headway at the United Nations, the Convention of Biodiversity and other international meetings of world leaders where important decisions are made.

This summer I had the privilege of attending the Youth Food Sovereignty Event in Laird, Saskatchewan. My role was to introduce the concept and pillars of food sovereignty and help the participants to put it into both their personal and the Canadian context. It was a well organized and very fun weekend! Thank you to the organizers for inviting me.

In October of 2008 Kalissa Regier, Nigel Smith and myself traveled to Mozambique as delegates to the 5th Conference of La Via Campesina.

As a delegate I participated in the Women's Assembly, speaking at the opening panel and working on the drafting committee for the final declaration. The women of La Via Campesina launched the International Campaign to Stop Violence Against Women. In Canada, violence against women remains a reality. For rural women, isolated from friends, family, neighbors and with no access to real help or shelters, violence can go on for years without detection. Violence comes in different forms. As sisters, the women of the NFU must be open to one another in this matter. But mostly, we call upon the men of the NFU to take a leading role in this campaign to end all violence against women everywhere. Violence is not just a woman's issue!

The 5th Conference of La Via Campesina General Assembly determined that there would be a global campaign against the perpetrators of rural poverty, theft of farmer's rights, livelihoods, land, knowledge and lives.

Those responsible include transnational corporations that

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A message from the...

Youth President &

Youth Vice President

NIGEL SMITH
YOUTH PRESIDENT

KALISSA REGIER
YOUTH VICE PRESIDENT

Fresh from our third NFU convention we feel that there is a definite momentum growing - within our organization and without- for the ideas and values that we in the NFU represent.

Three areas of initiative in particular deserve mention this month. Our very successful convention in Saskatchewan, the 5th conference of La Via Campesina in Mozambique, as well as a popular education workshop that we have collaborated on in Ottawa.

At our annual convention in late November, our youth caucus reflected upon the need to engage more of the youth who currently are part of the organization but with whom we're not necessarily in contact with. We have added two more advisors to our youth team in the NFU, and we would like to extend formal regards to Nathan Macklin and Krysta Chichak, who have volunteered to help us strengthen our presence in Alberta. A particular area that we want to address in the future is creating a more inviting atmosphere for the younger members of our farm families with the hope that we can strengthen both ourselves and our organization through better networking and support. We will be working on more clear and tangible reasons to engage youth in the organization. We want to offer a good time with a clear purpose- ensuring the survival of family farms in Canada. On this point, we will look to build on a good youth event last year with another in one of the eastern regions this coming year. We look forward to hearing from anyone who may be interested in meeting other young NFU members.

In October, we traveled with Women's President Colleen Ross to the 5th conference of La Via Campesina (LVC). For those who are not familiar with LVC, it is an umbrella organization of farm/peasant organizations throughout the world. Issues relating to the power of transnational corporations, agricultural sustainability, and farmer/peasant rights are the focal points that unite farmers from a plethora of different backgrounds. This

diversity of people came together under the unifying concept of food sovereignty- simply put, food by the people, for the people. LVC is internationally recognized and is a growing force for change in food policy.

Together with members from the United States and Mexico, we represented the youth of North America in an initial Youth Assembly held prior to the main conference. This meeting brought together 80 youth from some 40 different countries speaking what felt like nearly as many languages in a setting of solidarity and hope. Over an intense two days of meetings we heard about the challenges and strategies employed by member organizations particularly from Asia, South America and Africa. These areas of the "developing world" are where policies of neo-liberalism are most pervasive and have had a most pernicious effect on farmers in particular. On this point, there was unanimous agreement that change **MUST** be enacted. The obstacles seem at times insurmountable but the commitment and enthusiasm of participants was a real cause for optimism.

A final project from the fall months was the finalizing of a popular education workshop that we developed in conjunction with the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network (CBAN), and a youth-education organization by the name "Check Your Head"- they provided the educational resource support. Lucy Sharratt of CBAN was a tremendous help in this project. Youth from across the all across Canada from various points in the food system (food banks, urban educators, international food networks, local food promoters) were brought together and we collaborated on a very thoughtful presentation. The workshop is designed to be conducted in a variety of settings and age groups but is aimed specifically at youth and informing them about our food system and just how complex

(continued on page 23...)



The Food System and Democracy

If you want to understand how the global industrial food system works, take a good hard look at what's inside a Snickers bar.

Raj Patel, author of *Stuffed and Starved: Markets, Power and the Hidden Battle for the World's Food System*, told delegates to the NFU 39th annual convention in Saskatoon recently that the list of ingredients on the average candy bar is a good illustration of what's wrong with the global food system.

"It's a list of one incomprehensible thing after another," he stated. "The first ingredient is milk chocolate. We might think we know what that is. But actually if the cocoa in this bar comes from the Ivory Coast, and the majority of the world's cocoa does come from the Ivory Coast, then there is a small but significant chance that this bar was manufactured using child slavery."

But the most important ingredient is not cocoa, he added. "It's soy. It is used to create lecithin – an emulsifier which prevents the water and the fat from separating out and gives the bar its almost-infinite shelf life. Soy is the most widely-consumed vegetable oil in the world. It's used in three-quarters of everything that is processed and sold in supermarkets, and in 100% of everything sold by the fast food industry. It's an ingredient that we eat every day and are not even aware of it."

While soy's natural qualities make it an excellent food, its many industrial uses actually pose a threat to society and the environment, stated Patel. "The trouble comes, not from soy's natural properties, but from the way our society goes about using it," he said. He illustrated his point by noting that as early as the 1930s, car-maker Henry Ford was "enamoured" with the industrial potential of soy, even going so far as to commission a tailor to produce a \$40,000 custom suit made entirely from soy. "By the end of the 1930s, there were two bushels of soy in every Ford motor car," Patel stated. "They were used for fibre, and even as a lacquer on the inside of the car."

Today, soy underlies virtually aspect of the food system and the application of monoculture, with its



Raj Patel, author of the international best-selling book, *Stuffed and Starved: Markets, Power and the Hidden Battle for the World's Food System*. To hear his presentation, log onto www.nfu.ca and click on the link to "National Convention" on the left side of the page.

plethora of pesticides, herbicides and industrial processes. "There is a great deal of social and environmental harm in the food system today," he stated. "The question is: who benefits?"

The answer, he said, is best illustrated with a diagram that looks like an hourglass. "At the top there are millions of farmers around the world who grow food. And at the bottom there are the billions of consumers who eat it. But in the middle, there is a constriction. There are just a handful of corporations that are in the business of buying and selling food and getting it from farmer to consumers. These corporations have concentrated agricultural markets in their hands."

Patel said the most blatant example of corporate concentration is Unilever, which controls 90% of the global market in tea. It is more common to have three or four corporations control the market for most commodities. He quoted Dwaine Andreas, the former CEO of Archer Daniels Midland, who stated in 1995 that "there is not one grain of anything in the world that is sold in a free market. Not one."



(The Food System and Democracy, from page 6)

The only place that you will see free markets are in the speeches of politicians.”

Instead of competing against each other, global corporations actually collude with each other. “We shouldn’t be surprised that corporations do things that are in their interests,” he stated. “We shouldn’t be surprised that corporations are in the business of committing capitalist acts.”

What we should be surprised at, he added, is why there is a global market for food in the first place. “The world’s first global market in food was the global market in wheat, and that was only competed in 1880. So we’ve only had global markets in food for 130 years.”

The consequences of this development have been profound, he pointed out, drawing on India as an example. “India prior to British colonization was a feudal society,” he explained. The British imposed a market economy, exporting cheap grain to Britain. Productivity shot up, but the incidence of hunger also increased. “When you impose markets, you basically bring two simple rules to bear,” he stated. “The first rule is that if you have money, then you can get food from halfway around the world, and that’s what Britain did, it bought Indian grain and shipped it from India to Liverpool and Manchester and London to feed the workers. But you also introduce another rule, and that second rule is this: If you have no money then you will starve. And there are plenty of examples of workers loading the grain onto ships destined for England and then dying on the docks because they were too poor to afford the food that was available.”

Patel said in the 2000 years prior to British colonization, India suffered a massive famine, on average, once every 120 years. After colonization and the imposition of the market economy, famines occurred once every four years in India.

As global trade in food expanded and corporations became more powerful, the result has been greater impoverishment for most of the world’s farmers and workers, explained Patel. The process is aggravated by “structural adjustment policies” of the World Bank.

Meanwhile, he added, food itself is becoming a commodity that serves the interests of corporations. “We are always being told that our food is made for us,” he said. “Whenever we go into a supermarket we’re told we’re the ones who are in control of the food system. But actually the truth is quite the opposite. Increasingly today we are being made for our food. We are being transformed into the kind of people who think that the most ridiculous things constitute good food. Take, for example, Red Bull.

It’s a kind of caffeinated sugary beverage, sort of yellowish in colour, and the ingredients are water, sugar, caffeine and then a bunch of amino acids that are most commonly found in urine. We are sold this for two or three dollars for a tiny little can. So all of a sudden we find ourselves transformed into the kind of people who think that it’s a good idea to drink sweet and fizzy piss.”

He said it’s critical that society move to a different view of the food production and distribution system. He said the concept of “food sovereignty” provides a better

alternative. “Food sovereignty is about the ability to participate democratically in our food economy,” he stated. “Democracy is not just putting an ‘x’ in a box once every four years and then railing against the idiocy of our elected officials for the rest of the time. What we need is a more engaged, permanent kind of democracy. It’s harder work, but that’s okay. Because the kind of democracy we’ve been brought up on is not real democracy. It’s a pale poor cousin known as ‘consumer choice’.”

“We need to understand that we are not the consumers of democracy, we are the proprietors of democracy,” he concluded. (Terry Pugh) —nru—

At the top there are millions of farmers around the world who grow food. And at the bottom there are the billions of consumers who eat it. But in the middle, there is a constriction. There are just a handful of corporations that are in the business of buying and selling food and getting it from farmer to consumers. These corporations have concentrated agricultural markets in their hands.



Building a new world from the bottom up

Conditions are right for creating a new food system and a new society based on social justice and environmental sustainability, says Judy Rebick, author, broadcaster, and publisher.

Speaking at the NFU national convention in Saskatoon recently, Rebick said Canadians should take advantage of the “moment of democracy” that is presenting itself now, by working for changes that will benefit their communities across the country.

“We have two perfect storms coming together at the same time right now,” she said. “One perfect storm is the crisis of capitalism, which is the most profound crisis that I’ve seen in my lifetime, and possibly the most profound crisis in the history of capitalism. The Wall Street crash has meant the rich people and big corporations are getting hit by their own greed. Stocks have declined fifty percent in value.

“The other thing that has happened is a powerful convergence of movements for democratic change,” she added. “We’re coming into a new historic period. People like you are going to show the way forward, and it’s going to be recognized. This is going to be powerful because it’s both local and global and the same time.”

Rebick said all around the world, people have been building local alternatives to the global economic system. Even though these movements have not been coordinated with each other, and have sprung up independently, they all share a common vision. “People have been building new ways of change, and the food system is the most advanced of these alternatives,” she said “Your struggle to save the family farm, the organic food movement, the slow food movement. They’re all about the right to eat good food, and they all are a reaction to the negative aspects of global agribusiness.”

“We don’t have to build an alternative food system,” she said. “We already have an alternative food production and distribution system. It just needs to spread and we have to get policy-makers out of the way so they don’t stop it from spreading. What we need to do is grow it and have confidence in it.

“As much as you have struggled and suffered and as much as you have fought to save your family farms – now is your time,” she said.

Rebick said corporate globalization is “nothing more than a welfare system for the rich – plain and simple. Governments were captured by this false prophet of free trade and neo-liberalism – the false idea that prosperity



Judy Rebick, CAW-Sam Gindin Chair in Social Justice at Ryerson University. To listen to Judy Rebick’s presentation, log on to www.nfu.ca and click on the “National Convention” link on the left side of the page.

will happen by giving the corporations a free rein. But now the financial crisis has created a situation where the rulers don’t know what to do. And that’s the time when you can make gains. Right now is that moment of democracy.”

She said despite the economic crisis, the environmental crisis and the “crisis of despair and inequality” in the world, there are grassroots-based alternatives that are proving successful. She cited the “green jobs” movement in the United States, where unemployed youth in urban ghettos are reclaiming land from abandoned freeways and utilizing it for housing and gardens. She added that the recent election of Barack Obama as President of the United States is significant because he symbolizes a resurgence of hope.

Rebick said the forces of positive change are organizing around the world. “The values you put forward at this conference are also being expressed in other countries and other organizations that are also part of Via Campesina,” she said. She pointed to the MST organization of landless farmers in Brazil as an example. “The MST is one of the most powerful social movements in the world,” she said. “They organize three million people. They not only protest agribusiness and big electricity projects that exploit the environment, they occupy vacant land and build communities on that land. They educate people by involving them in democratic decision-making. It’s an amazing movement and a model for others to learn from.”

Rebick concluded that family farmers in Canada who are seeking change are “part of a massive movement that aims to take back control from the bottom up. It’s not about consultants telling you what you should do. It’s about you figuring out what to do. You’re the farmers. You’re the ones who know how a sustainable agriculture system should work. You know how to do it, but you can’t do it by yourselves. You have to link up with the other movements and make it happen.” (Terry Pugh) —nfu—



Cattle price crisis a result of corporate concentration

Cattle prices today are roughly half what they were in the fifty-year period between the Great Depression and the 1980s, even after adjusting for inflation. One of the reasons for this, according to Darrin Qualman, author of a major report for the National Farmers Union, is the high level of corporate concentration. Only three companies control 83% of the beef packing industry in Canada.

In a presentation to the NFU national convention in Saskatoon, November 22, Qualman, NFU Director of Research, said Cargill, Tyson and XL (Nilsson Brothers) together control an unprecedented share of the Canadian market. Two of those companies, Cargill and Tyson, are also the largest beef processors in the United States.

The big beef packing companies are vertically integrated and are able to manipulate farm gate beef prices by drawing periodically from their own “captive supply” stocks. “Captive supply is a way that packers organize supply in order to make themselves their own suppliers,” he said. “When packers own cattle in their own feedlots, they can just cross their arms and stop bidding if the price at the auction market starts to go up, because there are only two or three packers, and then they take their own cattle out of their own feedlots. When they do that the price in those auction marts starts to fall very quickly.”

Qualman displayed a graph which illustrated Alberta fed steer prices (adjusted for inflation) from 1930 until August, 2008. He pointed out that from the end of the Great Depression until 1989, prices rose and fell within a clearly defined range – with the low being \$120 and the high being \$250 per hundredweight live

weight. The average for that fifty-year period, after adjusting for inflation, was \$167 per hundredweight.

But after 1989, prices fell below \$120 per hundredweight and never recovered. “Last year, packers were paying independent farmers and independent feeders an average of \$87 per hundredweight live weight,” he said. “That’s literally half of what the average was for the 50-year period of the 1940s through the 1980s.”

“So when farmers feel that they’re not making any money, that the prices just make it impossible to make a living, that’s really true.”

Qualman called 1989 “a turning point” and said three related events took place in that year. “First, Cargill opened its massive packing plant in

High River, Alberta in May, 1989. That really triggered the transfer of ownership of the Canadian packing sector from Canadian-based companies to US-based companies,” Qualman said. “In 1988, the Canadian packing sector was 99.9 percent Canadian-owned. But shortly after Cargill opened its plant, IPB-Tyson also moved in and took control.”

The second, related, event was the implementation of the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement. “North America became an integrated market. All of the rules changed in 1989 and it really kicked continental integration into higher gear,” Qualman related. “Corporate concentration also increased. With Cargill and IBP-Tyson moving in, the number of Canadian cattle killed and processed in the plants of the big two or three companies really went up.”

The third factor was captive supply. “The portion of cattle that are owned or controlled by the packers really went up around 1989,” explained Qualman. “It’s hard to get good

(continued on page 10...)

Cattle prices today are roughly half what they were in the fifty-year period between the Great Depression and the 1980s, even after adjusting for inflation.



(Cattle price crisis, from page 9)

Canadian data but the US numbers show that packer ownership and control of cattle really took off in the late 1980s and 1990s.”

He noted that all these factors greatly boosted the market power of the big packing companies, particularly Cargill and Tyson, and that led directly to lower prices for cattle at the farm gate. “There is a very striking correlation between the level of market power and corporate concentration – and the prices that farmers receive,” he said. This applies not only to the packing companies, but also to the large retail chains. He illustrated this with a graph showing the spread between retail prices for hamburger and farm gate prices for cull cows. “The spread between a pound of ground beef and a pound of cow – live weight – held fairly steady at about \$1.25 through the 1990s,” he said, “But by 2003, that spread had nearly doubled to \$2 a pound. Keep in mind this was even before the BSE crisis. Now the average spread is about \$2.25 – about double the historic average. If that spread had stayed at \$1.25 a pound, then farmers would be receiving \$1.45 a pound instead of 45 cents.”

The bottom line, he noted, is that since 1989, “the amount of money that the big packers and retailers have taken for themselves has increased, and the amount left for farmers has decreased.” The big packers and retail chains are more efficient, but they also have more economic power, and they’ve used that power to increase their profits. They have the capacity to pay farmers more, but they’re paying less.”

In 1989, under pressure from the big packers looking to capitalize on the continental market, the federal and provincial governments moved to double production and exports of agricultural commodities, including cattle and hogs. “Before 1989, our exports to the US and other markets were relatively flat,” stated Qualman. “But between 1989 and 2003 Canada’s exports increased eight-fold. However, the export push has been an unmitigated disaster for farmers. Prices have fallen as exports have risen. The

calves that family farmers are selling now are bringing them only half as much as they were prior to the introduction of free trade in 1989.”

Qualman said the common explanation for the cattle price crisis lays the blame on the high Canadian dollar and high feed prices. But the facts don’t bear this out. He noted the last time Canada had a relatively high dollar and relatively high feed prices was in May, 1974. “At that time grain prices adjusted for inflation were \$10 a bushel,” he said, “and the Canadian dollar was worth \$1.06 US. But yet, cattle prices at that time, adjusted for inflation, were \$200 per hundredweight live weight.”

He also pointed to January, 2002, when the Canadian dollar was at a record low of 62 cents US and grain prices were at record lows. But cattle prices were still low at that time. “There is absolutely no correlation between the value of the dollar and cattle prices,” he stated.

He concluded that the NFU had drafted a 16-point plan to bring solutions to the cattle price crisis. At the top of the list is a ban on packer ownership and control of cattle in feedlots. “This debate about captive supply is well-advanced in the United States,” he said. “It’s time that debate gained ground in Canada as well.”

Other solutions include building collective marketing agencies for farmers to market their cattle, facilitating farmer ownership of packing plants, encouraging local abattoirs, organic and hormone-free beef, and changes to the check-off system for cattle commodity organizations. (Terry Pugh) —nfu—

The National Farmers Union report on the cattle sector is available online at www.nfu.ca . To listen to Darrin Qualman’s presentation, log on to www.nfu.ca and click on “National Convention” on the left side of the page.



CWB pooling system returns high price to farmers

In a year that saw both boom and bust in grain prices worldwide, the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) earned significant returns for western Canadian farmers. In fact, the 2007-08 crop year saw the CWB earn the largest pool return in history, returning an estimated \$560 million in additional revenue to producers' incomes.

Larry Hill, CWB Chair, told delegates to the NFU convention that this past year was unique in terms of marketing challenges for the farmers' marketing agency. "In the spring of 2008, grain prices rose to historic highs," he said. "It was the first time in a long time that grain prices looked like they would cover farmers' costs. The prevailing wisdom from market analysts and pundits was that we had reached a new plateau and that prices were going to stay high for a long time."

A few months later, however, commodity prices collapsed in the wake of the stock market crash.

Hill said the CWB avoided problems by taking a "patient and disciplined" approach to selling into a variety of markets around the world. Over time, the CWB "led the markets upward." The pooling system – which averages out the peaks and valleys of price fluctuations – allows farmers to share in the higher prices over the course of the year.

"When we look back over the past year, the pooling accounts serve producers very well," he said. "Our estimate is that \$560 million in additional revenue was added to producers' incomes because of the pooling system. We used United States Department of Agriculture data to see what American farmers received for their grain, and that's how we did the comparison." Hill added that he was recently in Montana and spoke to many farmers who told him they had sold their entire crop for \$6 a bushel or less. Meanwhile, he said, farm gate prices in Saskatchewan for good quality wheat sold through the CWB pooling accounts will be about \$8.44 a bushel, and durum will be about \$12 a bushel.

Hill noted that the CWB markets about half the durum wheat in the world, and early in the year, by taking a disciplined approach to sales, it was able to continually lead prices up. "The CWB uses prudent risk management and strategic marketing into various markets of the world," he said. "Canada consumes about 16% of our wheat and 9% of our durum. The US market is one of our most important markets. We sell about 5% of our wheat and 14% of our durum into that market, so we have to be very careful that we don't flood

the market and drive the price down. The American market is a very lucrative market for us, but we can't just try to sell the whole crop at once because it just doesn't work."

"When you add it all together and crunch the numbers, it comes to a benefit of over half a billion additional dollars attributable to pooling this year, money that is returned directly to farmers," said Hill.

In the wake of the stock market crash this past fall, the downside of the marketplace is now evident, said Hill. "There is no doubt the markets are in turmoil. The sub-prime mortgage crisis in the US has affected the entire global financial system. The US government recently gave a \$700 billion bailout to the financial sector. I've heard that referred to not as a 'bailout' - but rather as a 'stickup' of the American taxpayer."

The slide in commodity prices is putting downward pressure on all aspects of the marketplace, Hill said. For example, North Africa buys, on average, 3 million tonnes of durum annually – or nearly half the world's durum. France is very close to the North African market, and French sellers right now are leading the market down by about \$50 a tonne, said Hill. Another area of concern is Australia, where the wheat sector was recently deregulated. Now there are three or four bidders aggressively undercutting Canada on world wheat markets, and that will hurt both Australian and Canadian farmers in the long run, he added.

There is also a proposed text on agricultural trade at the World Trade Organization (WTO) talks which would eliminate government loan guarantees for the CWB by 2013, stated Hill. "This is going to be a major challenge for the CWB. We're going to need to find a way to replace this government guarantee with some way of financing that isn't going to cost producers a lot of money."

Shortly after the NFU convention, the WTO released a revised agriculture text, which specifically targeted the CWB single desk. While the deal was not signed, it remains a serious concern for farmers. **(Terry Pugh)** —nfu—



Larry Hill, Chair of the CWB. To listen to Larry Hill's presentation, log on to www.nfu.ca and click on the "National Convention" link on the left side of the page.



Supply management counters market turmoil

In Australia and New Zealand, dairy farmers receive some of the lowest prices in the world for their products. Yet consumers in those countries are paying some of the highest retail prices for milk in the world.

Jacques Laforge, President of the Dairy Farmers of Canada (DFC), told delegates to the NFU convention in Saskatoon recently that although Canada's supply-management system for dairy is "not perfect", its advantages far outweigh its drawbacks.

"Supply-management allows farmers to receive a fair price in return for a stable supply to processors, and it guarantees a reasonable price and quality supply to consumers," Laforge stated. "There is no reliance on the government treasury, and if we ever create a surplus in the system, it's the dairy farmer that's responsible for it. In a nutshell, that's how the system works."

Laforge said farmers around the world are interested in Canada's supply-management system, but not everyone is sold on it. "They like the stable price, and almost everything about our system," he stated. "But they don't want to limit their production. They would rather produce as much as they can, and that's not realistic if you're going to have a supply-management system. Farmers have to be able to discipline their own production in order to have a system with stable supply and stable prices."

Laforge said the two largest dairy processors in Canada, Saputo and Parmalat, are among the most profitable in the world. "When they compare their bottom line, even if they pay a higher price for milk compared to other parts of the world, they have a better net return in Canada, and the reason for that is stability. They know exactly what the milk price is, and they know exactly how much it will fluctuate, and they base their business decisions on that."

In other countries, processors which buy milk from individual farmers have the added cost of dealing with surpluses. In addition, prices can vary wildly. He cited an international survey done in 2005 by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the IFCN Dairy Research Centre to show how prices for milk at the farm gate compared to retail milk prices. The bottom line, he stated, is that farm gate prices bear no correlation to retail prices.

"Never get fooled into thinking there is a link between what the producers are receiving and what consumers are paying," he stated. "The best examples are New Zealand and Australia, two countries which have deregulated their dairy sectors."



Jacques Laforge, President of the Dairy Farmers of Canada. "Supply management allows farmers to receive a fair price in return for a stable supply to processors." To listen to Jacques Laforge's presentation, log on to www.nfu.ca and click on the "National Convention" link on the left side of the page.

The countries which returned the highest prices to farmers included Canada, Norway, Italy and Japan. "But when you look at the retail price, Canada is very similar to the United States and a lot of European countries," stated Laforge.

Laforge said the supply-management system rests on three pillars: import controls; producer pricing that is based on a formula that takes into account farmers' production costs; and production discipline by farmers. Because supply-management is geared toward the domestic market, there is concern that the current round of talks at the World Trade Organization (WTO) could undermine the system, warned the DFC President.

Laforge questioned whether talks aimed at liberalizing global trade in agriculture are beneficial, noting that 90% of the food produced in the world is consumed locally, and only 10% - mostly grain - is traded globally. "When you talk globalization you are trying to get 90% of the producers to adjust to the 10% of food that is traded globally. It's one thing to try to get clear trading rules for that 10% of commodities, but the WTO seems to be more about destabilizing the 90% of the market that is domestically consumed," he stated.

If the current agriculture text at the WTO is signed, Laforge said Canadian dairy farmers would be seriously impacted. "The potential income losses would be over \$1 billion," he said. "That includes \$750 million loss through tariff reduction, \$300 million through Tariff Rate Quota (TRQ) expansion, \$25 million from capping tariffs, and \$75 million from the end of export subsidies."

Laforge said supply-management is a tool that fits well into a new model of food sovereignty. "We need to rethink our food policy in Canada and around the world," he said. "Food sovereignty is the right of people to determine their own food and agriculture policy and regulate their domestic agriculture production and trade so as to achieve sustainable development." *(Terry Pugh)*

—nfu—



Seed regulation changes shift greater control to multinational companies

To listen to Terry Boehm's presentation, log on to www.nfu.ca and click on the "National Convention" link on the left side of the page.

Proposed changes to the variety registration system for seed in Canada will put increasing restrictions on farmers while shifting greater control to multinational seed companies, says Terry Boehm, NFU Vice-President.

In an address to the NFU convention recently, Boehm said the combination of legislative, contractual and biological mechanisms being implemented by seed companies around the world pose a serious threat to farmers' ability to save and re-use seed, and ultimately put global food security at risk.

Canada's variety registration system for seed was originally established nearly a century ago to protect farmers from unscrupulous seed merchants, and to encourage the development of varieties that were suitable to Canada's climate and soil conditions, he said. "The most infamous case was 'Alaska' wheat, which western settlers were told would yield 100 bushels to the acre. Many people lost their entire crops because of that false claim. Dominion experimental farms were set up in the wake of that debacle."

In addition, the *Canada Grain Act* and the Canadian Grain Commission were established to also ensure farmers' interests were protected.

But seed regulations in Canada are now "shifting from farmer protection to facilitating a profitable seed industry," said Boehm. "The seed industry is looking at a multitude of mechanisms to force farmers to purchase seed on a contract basis. These mechanisms take three main forms: legislative and regulatory, commercial contracts, and biological methods. Plant Breeders' Rights, gene patents and variety registration schemes are the main forms of the first category. The second is largely represented by Technology Use Agreements (TUAs), identity preservation and production contracts, which almost universally require a farmer to agree to not save any seed and to purchase seed for every crop cycle. The third form - biological control such as Terminator seed or Genetic Use Restriction Technology - is designed to biologically eliminate the ability of farmers or citizens to save their own seeds."

Boehm said current Canadian seed legislation is based on the UPOV 78 template, which allows farmers to save and re-use seed but prevents them from selling those seeds by variety for seventeen years. "The Canadian government has attempted to bring forward the much more restrictive

UPOV 91 template," he said "This would give plant breeders unprecedented control of seed, through such mechanisms as allowing the breeder exclusive power over conditioning – which is essentially cleaning – and stocking of those seeds, and would effectively make it impossible for farmers to save and re-use seed, thereby forcing them to purchase it at monopoly or oligopoly prices. It would also give breeders cascade rights to collect royalties at any point in the chain."

He said the federal government is moving to change the seed variety registration system through regulatory means by "creating three different levels of registration." Part One, he said, would be the status quo – with a variety's agronomic merit playing a role in determining whether it is registered. Part One would also retain independent testing and Recommending Committees. However, Part Two would remove the merit requirements and independent testing. Part Three would be just a simple listing of the varieties to be registered. He noted that potatoes as a crop type have been shifted into the latter category.

"This will present significant problems," he said. "Of course, this would open the door to an increasing number of genetically-modified crops."

In addition, the variety de-registration process was recently changed to accommodate an increasingly privatized seed system, he stated. "What I anticipate happening, and it's been proven out in canola, is that varieties will be deregistered at the request of the registrant relatively quickly and new varieties offered. This will put farmers on a variety treadmill, with the new varieties locked up tight through gene patents and other restrictions designed to eliminate farmers' ability to save and re-use seed."

Boehm compared these regulatory changes to the "enclosure" movement used by large landholders in England in previous centuries to force farmers off the land and into factories. "These mechanisms will turn farmers into workers for the seed companies," he said. "Farmers will have the right to invest in their land, to expend the cost of growing the seed, but they will pay the price."

Boehm concluded by quoting noted American journalist H.L. Mencken, who said: "For every problem there is a solution that's simple, elegant and wrong."

"The solutions offered by the government to remove protections for farmers in the *Canada Grain Act* and the Canadian Grain Commission, and to change the variety registration system, are just plain wrong," he said. (Terry Pugh)

—nfu—



Therefore Be It Resolved

RESOLUTIONS PASSED AT THE NFU'S 39TH ANNUAL CONVENTION
NOVEMBER 20TH TO NOVEMBER 22ND, 2008 – SASKATOON, SASKATCHEWAN

RURAL MAILBOX ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

WHEREAS Canada Post has undertaken a Rural Mailbox Assessment Program at a cost of \$600 million across Canada (\$711 per rural mailbox), and

WHEREAS this program is being carried out in an inconsistent and irrational manner, resulting in many individual rural mailboxes being rejected,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union call on the Federal Minister responsible for Canada Post to issue a directive to Canada Post to place a moratorium on the Rural Mailbox Assessment program, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in the future the rural mail driver and the owner of the rural mailbox discuss improvements to any mailboxes that may present a safety issue in the opinion of the rural mail driver, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union request the Minister responsible for Canada Post to issue a directive to Canada Post to re-assess all individual rural mailboxes that have been rejected thus far.

FOOD LABELLING

WHEREAS it has come to light that just because a food is labelled as "Product of Canada" there is no assurance that it was grown in Canada,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union request the Federal Government to change the labelling laws to reflect where a food was grown and processed and that the label reads "Grown in Canada and processed in Canada" rather than a "Product of Canada".

SERIOUS PLIGHT OF FARMERS

WHEREAS only 15% of the beef and 40% of the pork consumed in the Maritimes is grown in the region, and

WHEREAS climate change and global warming is a vital concern, and

WHEREAS it makes sense to first consume products that are grown in our area, and

WHEREAS the price paid for food by the consumer is enough to allow farmers to be fairly paid if the farmers were given their share,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union encourage the federal government to educate consumers, politicians, etc., about the plight of farmers and what can be done to help the situation.

ADMINISTRATION OF FARM FINANCIAL PROGRAMS

BE IT RESOLVED that federal and provincial farm financial programs, initiatives, etc., be administered by the civil servants of the respective government departments.

PROVINCIAL AND NATIONAL FOOD COMMISSION

WHEREAS farmers and consumers have no protection in the production or marketing of food,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the government establish legislation to form a provincial and national food commission, organized as a crown corporation.

TWO-PRICE SYSTEM

BE IT RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union ask the provincial governments and the federal government to immediately establish a two-price system for hogs, cattle, potatoes, and grain, based on the full cost of production and Canadian consumption.

REGISTRATION OF NURSE PRACTITIONERS

WHEREAS there is a shortage of family doctors and the government fails to move to register nurse practitioners,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the provincial governments amend the pertinent Medical Acts to allow as many nurse practitioners as are needed in the system and that the pharmacists be able to participate in the same way.

LOBBY RE: HORSES

WHEREAS the 1989 retail Sales Tax Act includes the raising of horses as part of farming, and

WHEREAS auditors from the Ontario Ministry of Finance recently have decided that the 8% retail sales tax must be paid on the sale of horses to non-farmers, and

WHEREAS this tax may be applied to past sales, and

WHEREAS exemptions apply only to sales to those with a farm business registration number but horse sales, stabling and riding are important for the rural economy,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU lobby the provincial government to continue to consider horses as agricultural products and not subject to retail tax.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that maintenance, care and stabling of non-race horses contributes to the rural economy and should be, therefore, considered and classed as an agricultural activity.

(continued on page 15...)



ORDERLY MARKETING FOR SMALL FLOCK PRODUCERS

WHEREAS there appears to be a large and growing market for small flock produced free-range and/or certified organic chicken, and

WHEREAS the cost of quota is prohibitive for many producers, especially young farmers and that often the benefits of quota such as processor negotiations do not accrue to small flock quota holders, and

WHEREAS small flock producers can hope to gain a more secure financial return by working within an orderly marketing system that creates standards for food safety and cost of production,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union begin a process of creating a proposal that outlines an orderly poultry market system specifically designed for small flock producers.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that once a proposal is finalized, the National Farmers Union approach federal and provincial governments with a request for financial assistance in creating a small flock producer label and a public education campaign to distinguish chicken raised to agreed-upon standards.

SUPPORT FOR CANADIAN-MADE PROMOTIONAL ITEMS

WHEREAS the NFU supports local trade,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU try to source Canadian-made promotional items.

EXEMPTIONS FROM PURCHASING QUOTA

WHEREAS the NFU has policies which promote local healthy food production and consumption, and

WHEREAS the NFU has policies to promote more farmers instead of fewer farmers, and

WHEREAS supply-managed marketing boards need positive public relations,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU work aggressively to get supply-managed marketing boards to implement small but meaningful exemptions from purchasing quota for family farms who market that produce locally.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that these exemptions should be significant enough to be a significant portion of a diversified family farm's income.

CTA RESPONSE TO RAIL ISSUES

BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU ask the Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA) to open an office in Western Canada (or reform the mandate of an existing western office) which will:

- a) closely monitor the railway revenue cap;
- b) respond quickly to rail service issues in the grain sector;

- c) collect data and analyze railway costing and efficiency sharing practices;
- d) respond quickly to other rail/rail service issues as they arise.

DECLINING FOSSIL FUELS AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

WHEREAS grain producers are completely dependent on fossil fuels to produce grain, and

WHEREAS grain producers will be unable to continue to grow grain using their present practices due to the ever increasing cost and decreasing supply of fuel,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the NFU urge the Government of Canada to assist farmers, in the long term, to change their production methods to decrease their overall reliance on fossil fuels.

REINSTATEMENT OF KVD

WHEREAS the recent action of the Minister of Agriculture to remove Kernel Visual Distinguishability (KVD) from variety registration and grading standards of wheat threatens the quality and reliability of our grading system, and the Minister has further aggravated the situation by allowing imports of high-starch, low-protein wheat,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the NFU demand the Minister of Agriculture rescind his order to remove KVD from grading and variety registration requirements as of August 1, 2008 and reinstate KVD until such time as reliable, affordable measures to maintain class distinctions are in place.

WESTERN GRAINS RESEARCH FOUNDATION

WHEREAS most of the Western Grains Research Foundation funding is obtained through check-offs on wheat and barley,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU request of the Western Grains Research Foundation that WGRF check-off funds be used solely for development of wheat and barley.

LIVESTOCK CRISIS

WHEREAS farmers who raise cattle are facing massive losses, and

WHEREAS these losses and the overall destabilization and decimation of independent cattle producers are caused by:

- the rising market power of packers;
- a lack of competition;
- a market structure that is unfair, opaque, manipulated, and that facilitates the price-depressing strategies of the most powerful players; and
- government policies that advantage packers and large feedlots over independent cow-calf producers.

(continued on page 16...)



(Resolutions, from page 15)

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU calls on federal and provincial governments to:

1. Outlaw captive supply – packer (or affiliate) ownership or control of feeder cattle and packer control of cattle through forward contracts that do not specify fixed prices (a 7 days prior to slaughter exemption could apply);
2. Block any future mergers and takeovers in the beef packing sector that involve the four largest players;
3. Amend the Competition Act to restrict any one company from owning more than 20% of the capacity in any food processing sector;
4. Require Canada's dominant meat processors and food retailers to open their books annually to a panel of independent accountants and economists who would report on the magnitude of packer and retailer profits in the beef sector;
5. Measure and report cattle farmers' cost of production; the relative proportion of the profits within the sector that accrue to farmers, packers, and retailers; and the allocation of taxpayer-funded payments to the various parts of the sector;
6. Target farm support programs to independent producers, ensure those payments are large enough to ensure financial sustainability, cap payments at \$400,000 per year per operation, and cease to give taxpayer money to packers or their affiliates;
7. Encourage the industry to move to 100% BSE testing and to minimize non-therapeutic hormone use, in that way maximizing Canada's beef marketing options outside of the US;
8. Revise government policies so that the goal is maximum sustainable profits for family farmers, and not solely production and export maximization; and
9. Restructure check-off funded cattle producer representative organizations so that a cow-calf producer's money goes to his or her choice of organizations that represent cow-calf producers, and so that large feedlots and packers can fund their own lobby groups.

HEARINGS ON PRODUCTION COSTS

BE IT RESOLVED the NFU demand the House of Commons Agriculture Committee conduct public hearings across rural Canada into astronomical farm input costs.

SRMS (SPECIFIED RISK MATERIALS)

WHEREAS animal tissue (SRMs – Specified Risk Materials) is viewed to contribute to BSE in cattle, and

WHEREAS SRMs in feed is viewed by many importing nations as a restriction for importing Canadian beef, and



Delegates line up at the floor mikes during debate on resolutions.

NOTE: Resolutions that were not dealt with at the Convention were referred to the NFU Board. Resolutions adopted by the Board at its next meeting will be printed in the next issue.

WHEREAS the Canadian Cattlemen's Association is advocating the CFI remove the restrictions of the current feed bans and allow SRMs back into feed,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU supports the continuing ban of SRMs from livestock feeds.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the NFU initiate a media campaign outlining this position.

C.W.B.

Whereas the NFU strongly supports the CWB single-desk selling of wheat and barley.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the NFU work to ensure that any changes to CWB marketing authority be made by farmers through an honest process.

CANADIAN TRANSPORTATION AGENCY

BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU call on the federal government to have the Canadian Transportation Agency conduct a thorough costing review of rail transportation costs.

SPRAY DAMAGE

WHEREAS spray drift of agriculture chemicals have the capacity to cause serious environment damage and damage neighbouring crops,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU lobby the provincial and federal governments to make agricultural chemical applicators liable for drift damage.

(continued on page 17...)



(Resolutions, from page 16)

NUCLEAR ENERGY

BE IT RESOLVED the NFU reject any new nuclear facilities due to their negative social and environmental impacts on this and all future generations due to the radioactive waste produced.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the NFU lobby the provincial government and the federal government to promote conservation and alternative renewable electrical power generation options such as solar wind, bio-mass, tidal, co-generation, geo-thermal, low impact run of rivers and potentially clean coal.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the NFU demand full disclosure of costs associated with nuclear waste disposal, decommissioning of existing nuclear plants and that such costs are identified as operating costs.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the NFU rejects privatization of energy development and reaffirm support for public ownership of renewable sustainable energy options.

FOOD INSPECTION

WHEREAS due to apparent cutbacks, it appears new regulations, adopted by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture on April 1, 2008, no longer require food inspectors at meat packing and processing plants to immediately report listeria contamination directly to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) which would have followed up by a full clean-up by the CFIA of the affected plant. Instead the new regulation required the plant inspectors to submit written reports to the CFIA inspectors twice a month and apparently there was no requirement that serious listeria contamination be flagged in these reports.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union investigate the validity of the changes made to the CFIA as of April 1, 2008. And if these changes and cutbacks did occur, the NFU must immediately lobby the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food and the CFIA requesting:

- a. The plant inspection and testing be carried out by qualified CFIA inspectors, and
- b. That the original number of paid government inspectors at meat packing and processing plants be also reinstated.

PUBLIC REVIEW OF AGRICULTURE POLICIES

WHEREAS the data shows current agriculture policies have been a complete failure; and

WHEREAS to determine how to move forward we need a solid examination of what brought us to this point,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU call upon the federal and provincial governments to carry out a public review process of agriculture policy outcomes and the performances of Ministries of Agriculture as a basis for real solutions that prioritize family farmers and the financial viability of the multi-generational family farm.

DISPROPORTIONATE SUBSIDIES TO AGRIBUSINESS

WHEREAS close to \$5 billion per year is budgeted for agricultural support in Canada, and

WHEREAS the farm income crisis continues unabated,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU direct its research department to research and illustrate the disproportionate receipt of agricultural support funding by very few very large agribusiness enterprises and the continuing unaddressed inadequate support to the majority of small and medium-sized operations which are still the greatest part of Canadian agricultural production and the understood and accepted face of the Canadian agricultural industry.

PLANT VARIETY DEREGISTRATION

BE IT RESOLVED the NFU advocate changes to the variety deregistration system which will ensure that the system is not used to eliminate varieties for the sole purpose of selling new and more restricted varieties by eliminating older varieties. These measures would include a public appeals mechanism, as well as submission to a recommending committee for review.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that for any variety that is cancelled (deregistered), that Plant Breeders' Rights should end at that time also.

COMPLIANCE WITH COURT RULING ON PVYN

WHEREAS the federal government is refusing to comply with a court ruling that directed the government to offer a cash settlement to PVYn-affected farmers in New Brunswick,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU call upon the federal government to follow the court's direction to offer the NB farmers a reasonable cash settlement to resolve its PVYn legal case.

CANADIAN GRAIN COMMISSION AND INTERESTS OF GRAIN PRODUCERS

BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU insist to all levels of government that the mandate of the Canadian Grain Commission continue to be guided by the principle of acting in the interests of the grain producers and that this shall remain in the Canada Grain Act.

—nfu—



NFU National Officials elected

Stewart Wells of Swift Current, Saskatchewan, was re-elected for his seventh term as President of the National Farmers Union at the recent convention in Saskatoon.

Terry Boehm of Allan, Saskatchewan, was also returned to the post of NFU Vice-President.

Colleen Ross of Iroquois, Ontario, was re-elected NFU Women's President. There was an election at the convention for this position, and Colleen Ross won a narrow majority over Karen Fyfe of Prince Edward Island, who served last year as NFU Women's Vice-President.

Joan Brady of Dashwood, Ontario, is the new NFU Women's Vice-President, after being elected by acclamation at the convention.

Nigel Smith of Elgin, Ontario was returned as NFU Youth President; and Kalissa Regier of Laird, Saskatchewan, was re-elected NFU Youth Vice-President. Both were chosen by acclamation.

The NFU Board of Directors consists of: Ranald MacFarlane (PEI), Betty Brown (NB), Grant Robertson, Don Mills and Dave Lewington (Ontario), Fred Tait and Bev Stow (Manitoba), Glenn Tait and Ed Sagan (Saskatchewan), Jan Slomp and Doug Scott (Alberta), Peter Eggers and Neil Peacock (Peace River/BC). —nfu—

NFU CONVENTION DVDS ORDER FORM

Presentations by several keynote speakers at the National Farmers Union convention were recorded on DVD, and are now available through the NFU office.



RAJ PATEL

Stuffed and Starved: Markets, Power and the Hidden Battle for the World's Food System



BOB KINGSTON

Agriculture Quality and Food Safety

JUDY REBICK

Rebuilding the Food System for the Future



DARRIN QUALMAN

Building Solutions to the Livestock Crisis



DVD Order Form: Please make cheque payable to National Farmers Union and mail to NFU, 2717 Wentz Avenue, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7K 4B6.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Please send me: _____ copies of Raj Patel DVD (\$20 each); _____ copies of Judy Rebick DVD (\$20 each)
 _____ copies of Darrin Qualman DVD (\$20 each); _____ copies of Bob Kingston DVD (\$20 each)

Total enclosed: \$ _____



Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

The results of the recent Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) Director elections have been made public. Single desk supporters took four out of five Director seats.

For myself and thousands of other western grain producers, this is very welcome news.

Obviously, farmers have not allowed themselves to be intimidated by the heavy-handed methods and dishonesty employed by the Harper Government in its effort to discredit and destroy the Canadian Wheat Board.

The CWB is a grain producers' business organization. Only grain producers have the right to make major decisions regarding the operations of the CWB, and this is through the democratic process of one person – one vote. In other words, the federal government does not have the legal right to interfere. But interfere they did. Farmers took them to court several times. The courts ruled in favour of the farmers every time. It is indeed a sad state of affairs when farmers must challenge the federal government through court actions to protect themselves and their marketing agency.

The present Harper Government seems to have little respect for democratic rights, fair play and honesty.

This should serve as a wake-up call to all Canadians. Can the Harper Government be trusted to govern Canada in the future?

George Hickie, Waldron, Saskatchewan



Dear Editor,

When my sister-in-law invited me last month to go along with her to the National Farmers Union annual conference in Saskatoon, I hesitated. To me, the letters NFU could have stood for "Not for You." The organization was for real farmers: big league players, with seven or eight sections of land. People who drove heavy duty tractors (unlike our old John Deere 4020), pulling cultivators and tanks with so many plastic tubes, they looked like they belonged in a laboratory. *But what the heck, I thought, I'll be in my old stomping ground. If things get too boring, I can always visit my buddies.*

Well, I've come back an informed and inspired farmer. I met people of both sexes, every colour and every age from 18 to 90. Some own vast tracts of prairies: others don't own any land at all, like the youngsters from Patchwork Gardens outside of Kingston, Ontario, who rent an acre or so, and supply a co-op and farmers' market with beautiful, nutritious vegetables. The NFU farmers asked questions, in addition to just complaining. At the end of every talk there was a queue at both microphones. Boy, was I impressed!

The overall prognosis for industrialized agriculture is, I discovered, extremely grim. We're going back to feudal times. Farmers caught in the system are serfs, toiling for the benefit of lords like Monsanto, Cargill, and Tyson. Did you know, for instance, that not only do the big American packing plants process 83% of Alberta beef, they also own feedlots, auctions marts, and feed mills? "Vertical integration" – it's called. An innocuous term for price control. Monsanto is just as scary. I knew it "owned" many of the grain varieties on the approved list of the Grain Commission (if you don't raise these types, your grain is automatically relegated to "feed" quality hard wheat or inferior durum), but I didn't realize it controls many of the garden seed companies as well. In Africa, Monsanto and Bill Gates are part of a "Green Revolution" – another feel-good term – pouring fertilizer over the countryside instead of assisting with green manures and other soil-enhancing techniques, so that poor peasants will be indebted to the American way of farming. And guess which side Stephen Harper is on, the corporations' or producers'?

So much for the bad guys. It's the positive stuff I really wanted to write about. In the words of Buffalo Springfield's 1967 song: *There's somethin' happening here/ What it is ain't exactly clear.* But it's a change from the bottom up. The economic, environmental, agricultural and health crises are coalescing into a movement that is seeking "the common good" – now there's an old-fashioned phrase – including food sovereignty. The 100-mile dieters, the farmers market-goers, the farm-gate producers, the Patchwork kids from Kingston – are all part of this movement. I believe it will grow until it offers a parallel marketing system to all agriculturalists. I believe it will save the family farm.

I encourage you to check out the excellent analysis of the beef cattle crisis posted on the NFU website at www.nfu.ca.

**Sandy Easterbrook, Kettle Crossing Farm,
Sundre, Alberta**



Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Over the past two years, I have witnessed with great dismay the unlawful lobby by the present federal government and their unseemly tactics to destroy the Canadian Wheat Board. The government's tactics include:

1. Firing Adrian Measner without cause;
2. Imposing a gag order on the CWB before the last bizarre and biased referendum on barley marketing, and
3. Replacing competent CWB Directors with appointed directors whose only objective appears to be the dismantling of our farmer-controlled agency that markets Canadian grain and upholds our high-quality grain standards.

The CWB is a *pooled marketing agency for farmers/farm families. It was created as a result of farmers' efforts. Its role is to support farmers in a global environment that is overwhelmingly controlled by corporate interest.* I am often amazed at the number of farmers who mistakenly view their own marketing agency as the enemy, and the shareholder driven companies (ADM, Cargill, etc...) as their allies.

If the CWB is dismantled, our only *marketing "choice"* will be to sell to one of several companies whose allegiance is to their own bottom line, not to farmers. They are concerned with making a large profit margin for their shareholders, not with providing a fair price at the farm gate for farmers and their families.

When I do the math, our farm is further ahead financially because of the CWB. I have a strong desire to protect our marketing agency.

Sincerely,
Lori Erhardt, Big Dog Seeds Inc.,
Oxbow, SK



Dear Editor,

Several decades of deregulation championed by Britain's Margaret Thatcher, U.S. President Ronald Reagan, Canada's Brian Mulroney, and their biggest cheerleader, Stephen Harper, have come home to roost with the global market melt down.

Of course we have been here before. For farmers the real depression started in 1921 with the loss of the first Canadian Wheat Board (CWB). They and their wheat pool cooperatives had spent most of the 1920's building up their own dual market version of the CWB, which they called the Central Selling Agency. When capitalism and free enterprise blew itself apart in a cloud of greed and self-delusion in 1929, the Central Selling Agency was destroyed as well.

Farmers were faced with the task of dealing with an even more unstable and dangerous system on their own, so they lobbied ferociously and got the Canadian Wheat Board Act passed in 1935. It took several years of losses totalling hundreds of millions of dollars before Ottawa learned what farmers knew: a dual market cannot work. Finally, in 1942, Ottawa proclaimed the single desk provisions passed within the 1935 CWB Act.

One wonders how much more destruction and instability Stephen Harper and his Conservative cronies need to see before they abandon their impractical ideological vendetta against the CWB. In the face of the global market melt down, it is obvious there is no realistic alternative to the CWB's single desk selling authority and price pooling. As their retirement investments go up in smoke, too many people are finding out the so-called market is a highly defective and unstable institution. All of Stephen Harper's cheerleading cannot change the fact that in a very risky and unstable world we need the CWB more than ever.

Sincerely,
Ken Larsen,
Box 42, Benalto, Alberta T0M 0H0



(Message from the Women's President, from page 4)

have the support of governments around the world, and our own. It was determined that each region would focus on one transnational at a time, and for a time to expose their deeds. The NA Region of LVC will continue to discuss how we best operationalize this plan.

Our time in Mozambique seemed long, and was exhausting. But, coming together as members of LVC is critical as we continue to organize, mobilize and advocate for real agrarian reform with Food Sovereignty as our guide.

Throughout the year there are opportunities and invitations to present before the House of Commons and Senate Standing Committees on Agriculture. The spring Nigel Smith and I presented to the Senate on the farm income crisis- the causes and solutions.

Earlier this summer I went before the Senate committee to speak to Bill C-33, the proposal to amend the biofuels act. This was indeed exciting and challenging. With many allies, we spoke with many voices with one message- NOT NOW! Although it appeared the senate agreed with us, they chose to vote in favour of the bill and later confessed that there was "considerable political pressure" to do so. So much for second sober thought!

It is at times easy to get discouraged and feel a tad

downtrodden. Yet, as I attend meetings and meet wonderful people from across Canada and from around the world I am constantly encouraged to know there are people out there who share our progressive vision for a more sustainable, environmentally responsible, accessible and just food system. There are ordinary folks, just like me, who are doing their little bit to effect change- locally, regionally and globally.

As a mother, sister, daughter, wife and friend I feel that responsibility- that it is indeed my turn. I know that many of you here share that calling. As individuals, both men and women, youth and elders, through shared vision, mutual respect and caring we can work in solidarity now and build the road that leads to positive change. Through our collective struggles to save the CWB, to stop Terminator Technology, to stop the WTO from further destroying food, farming and communities or to introduce food sovereignty as a policy alternative- we have had many victories.

I would like to thank each one of you for the role you have played in these struggles. Let us continue to strengthen our bonds as fellow farmers and friends, supporting each other with kind words and encouragement, as we work in solidarity to ensure justice for all people everywhere.

In Solidarity, Colleen Ross



GEOFFREY ARTHUR HOPKINS

Geoff Hopkins, a longtime member of the Saskatchewan Farmers Union and the National Farmers Union, died peacefully at the age of 95 in his home after a full and remarkable life. He is survived by four of his children, Anne Hanson, Linda Murphy (Michael), Deb Hopkins (Tim Quigley), and Bruce Hopkins (Wendy Manson). He was born April 23, 1913, and he passed away October 4, 2008.

He was predeceased by his beloved wife and best friend, Betty (Elizabeth Vindeg); his son-in-law, Alden Hanson; his son, John Hopkins (just one day before Geoff's death), and eight of his eleven siblings.

Geoff was born in the Conquest Hotel. He spent his life, until retirement, on Stockwell Heights Farm in the Surbiton area, except during his four years of service with the 67th Battery in Europe during World War II. During those years he formed bonds of friendship and loyalty that endured until he died. He was a reeve and councillor for the R.M. of Fertile Valley. He, with Betty's help, was postmaster for the village of Conquest for several years. After retirement, Geoff and Betty moved to Saskatoon. He loved Stockwell Heights and farming. Even after he retired he continued to make regular trips to check on the crops and cattle. Geoff was known for his intelligence, integrity, courage, generosity, compassion and wise counsel. He was a keen student and life long learner. He read more in his 90s than many people read in their entire lives! His interests included politics, politics and more politics. He spent his life committed to issues of social justice; just days before his death he wrote a letter to Jack Layton chock-a-block with strategic directions for the NDP. Geoff provided a great deal of respectful and useful advice to his children, grandchildren, and others, even if it sometimes fell on deaf ears. In his remaining days, Geoff stated that he had had a full life with no regrets and that he was 'ready to go.' He spent a lot of time trying to convince his family that 'it was for the best.' However, he had such tremendous influence on the lives of those who knew him that it will be impossible for them to 'let him go'. He will be with them all as long as they live.





JOHN GEOFFREY HOPKINS

John Geoffrey Hopkins (aka Radar, Boss), a longtime member of the National Farmers Union, died of lymphoma at Royal University Hospital on October 3, 2008, just eight days short of his 62nd birthday, and one day prior to the death of his father, Geoffrey Hopkins.

He leaves to mourn his siblings Anne Hanson, Linda (Michael) Murphy, Deborah (Tim Quigley), Bruce (Wendy Manson), 11 nieces and nephews and an incredible bunch of loyal and cherished friends in Macrorie, Conquest, Outlook, Dinsmore and surrounding area. John was predeceased by his mother, Betty and his dear friend and brother in law, Alden Hanson.

John was born in Outlook on October 11, 1946, the eldest of 5 children, eleven months before his twin sisters, Anne and Linda, who were an important part of his life. John farmed most of his life with Bruce and Wendy and his cousin, Donald. He would say his first harvest was when he was 9 years old. His last "official harvest" was the fall of 2006. When John retired, he bought a diesel Jetta so he could tour neighbouring communities more efficiently. He also bought a beautiful yard tractor, which he shared with all his neighbours. John loved socializing with his friends and often went to town "for parts", ending up, inevitably, at coffee row. He loved tractor-pulling and his Model 'A'; he hated cattle, harvesting barley, paper work and tapioca pudding; he ignored house and yard work. He was loved by many and will be greatly missed.



Gerald Mettlewsky of Wilkie, Saskatchewan, passed away in February, 2008. He was a long-time member of the National Farmers Union.

Elmer Lafrentz of Estevan, Saskatchewan, passed away in early September, 2008.

Jean Lewis of Stewiacke, Nova Scotia, passed away September 20, 2008.

Mrs. Muriel Rieger of Lacombe, Alberta, passed away September 12, 2008.

Thomas Robinson of Simpson, Saskatchewan passed away recently.

Horace Beach, a long-time NFU member, passed away in October. A Memorial and Thanksgiving Service for Horace Beach was held on October 11 in Ernfold, Saskatchewan.



HENRY TABBERT



It is with sadness that Renfrew County National Farmers Union learned of the passing of **Henry Tabbert** on November 27, 2008. He was 77 years old. We extend our sympathies to his wife Eleanor and his children, Timothy (Connie), Terry (Jennifer), Bonnie (Kent) Daniel and Linda.

Henry was a member of the Executive of the Renfrew County NFU Local. Henry attended the National Farmers Union Founding Convention in 1969 in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and has been a lifetime member ever since. His sons, Danny and Tim, are also presently NFU members, as is his brother Helbert and nephews Glenn and Bruce.

Henry attended a Regional Meeting two or three years ago. His wake took place at the Fraser-Morris and Heubner Funeral Home in Cobden, Ontario, on Friday, November 28.



(Youth Messages, from page 4)

it is. The idea is that with greater knowledge of the food system we will have more engagement from people when issues relating to food come about. What the NFU Youth contributed was the input of young farmers about their experiences in farming as well as knowledge of food sovereignty and the always enjoyable administrative work that goes with such a project. The workshop was piloted first at the Food Secure Canada AGM in Ottawa and then again at the NFU convention in Saskatchewan. Both of these exercises provided very positive feedback and we

expect to see a dedicated and knowledgeable group of youth presenting the workshop.

We are taking the Youth in several different directions and looking to build interest in any ways that we can. There are many examples of young people doing great things in agriculture and by highlighting some of them we hope that we have furthered the name and the ideas of the NFU.

*In Union,
Nigel Smith, Youth President and
Kalissa Regier, Youth Vice President*

NATIONAL FARMERS UNION 39TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

November 20TH – November 22ND, 2008, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

AUDIO RECORDING ORDER FORM

To order a CD or MP3 of the convention sessions, fill out your name and address, indicate which sessions you want, and number of copies. Cost for each CD is \$10; MP3 copies are \$25 for each day. Please add \$5 shipping charge for each order. **CHEQUES/ MONEY ORDERS PAYABLE TO: Jack Getzlaf, 1112 Ave. D North, Saskatoon, SK S7L 1N8 — Ph: 306-665-0669**

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Session	Circle the session number you wish to order	# of CDs	# of MP3s
1	Welcomes; Greetings; Steering Comm. Report; Opening Address – President Stewart Wells		Day 1
2	<u>Address:</u> Paul Nicholson: “Farmers and the Global Food Crisis”		
3	<u>Reports:</u> 1) Board of Directors; 2) Youth President; 3) Women’s President; and 4) National Farmers Foundation		
4	<u>Public Meeting:</u> Raj Patel – “Stuffed and Starved: Markets, Power and the Hidden Battle for the World Food System”		
5	<u>Address:</u> Rachel Bezner Kerr - “Soils, Food & Healthy Communities: Views from Malawian Farmers”		Day 2
6	<u>Address:</u> Terry Boehm - “A New Feudalism? Seeds, Grains & Farmers’ Liability” <u>Address:</u> Larry Hill – “Strengthening Farmers’ Market Power”		
7	<u>Address:</u> Jacques Laforge – “Supply-Management: A System that Works for Everyone”		
8	<u>Address:</u> Jim Smolik - “Bill C-39 and Changes to the Canada Grain Act”		Day 3
9	Banquet		
10	<u>Address:</u> Darrin Qualman – “Building Solutions to the Livestock Crisis”		
11	<u>Panel:</u> Kim Perry, Peter Dowling and Susan Fitzpatrick – “Restoring Sustainable Farms for a Sustainable Local Food System”		
12	<u>Address:</u> Judy Rebick – “Rebuilding the Food System for the Future:		
13	<u>Reports:</u> Youth Caucus; Women’s Caucus; and International Program Committee <u>Closing Address:</u> NFU National President		



NFU BOARD MEMBERS AND OFFICES

Regional Offices:

Region 1: Tax: 559 Route 390, Rowena, NB E7H 4N2 Ph: (506) 273-4328
Financial Services: 120 Bishop Dr., Summerside, PEI C1N 5Z8 Ph: (902) 436-1872
 Region 3: RR#2, Godfrey, ON K0H 1T0 Ph: 888-273-5545 (in Ont.) or (613) 273-5545 (outside Ont.)
 Region 5: Newdale Shopping Centre, 2999B Pembina Hwy., Winnipeg, MB R3T 2H5 Ph: (204) 261-0500
 Region 6: 2717 Wentz Avenue, Saskatoon, SK S7K 4B6 Ph: (306) 652-9465

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Youth Advisory Committee: *Erin Fyfe*, Breadalbane, PE; *Caitlin Hall*, Palmerston, ON; *Krysta Chickak*, Smoky Lake, AB; *Nathan Macklin*, Grande Prairie, AB.



NATIONAL FARMERS UNION FINANCIAL SERVICES

NEWDALE SHOPPING CENTRE, 2999B PEMBINA HIGHWAY, WINNIPEG, MB R3T 2H5
 PHONE: (204) 261-0500 - FAX: (204) 275-5396

NFU INCOME TAX SERVICE

2009 MANITOBA RURAL VISIT SCHEDULE

<u>TOWN</u>	<u>HOTEL</u>	<u>DATES</u>
SWAN RIVER	SUPER 8	FEBRUARY 17 TH & 18 TH
ROBLIN	ROBLIN MOTOR INN	FEBRUARY 19 TH THROUGH 25 TH
GRANDVIEW	---	FEBRUARY 26 TH
MORDEN	MORDEN MOTOR INN	MARCH 4 TH TO MARCH 11 TH
MELITA	---	MARCH 2 ND
KILLARNEY	---	MARCH 3 RD
ARBORG	ZANS FAMILY INN	MARCH 16 TH TO 19 TH
FISHER BRANCH	INTERLAKE MOTOR HOTEL	MARCH 16 TH AND 17 TH
MINNEDOSA	GATEWAY MOTEL	MARCH 23 RD AND 24 TH
HAMIOTA	HAMIOTA MOTEL	MARCH 23 RD TO 25 TH
RUSSELL	RUSSELL INN	MARCH 26 TH AND 27 TH
VIRDEN	---	MARCH 25 TH
TREHERNE	CREEKSIDE HIDEAWAY HOTEL	MARCH 30 TH TO APRIL 1 ST
GLADSTONE	GLADSTONE HOTEL	MARCH 30 TH AND 31 ST
PORTAGE	CANAD INNS	APRIL 6 TH TO 9 TH
CYPRESS RIVER	---	APRIL 13 TH AND 14 TH