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THE union farmer

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*"Bay Horse in Harness", Painting by Donna Greenstein
(see page 2 for more information on the artist)*

On the Cover...

Painting by NFU member Donna Greenstein

The cover painting on this issue of the *Union Farmer Quarterly* was created by Donna Greenstein, a member of the National Farmers Union in Ontario.

Donna was born in Guelph, Ontario when her dad was a student at the Ontario Veterinary College just after WWII. When she was ten she showed her Jersey calf at the local 4-H club shows. She grew up helping at her dad's Etobicoke Animal Hospital, but her real passion was riding, and drawing, horses.

In 1974, she and her husband moved to a 50 acre farm just north of Toronto, where their first five bred cows provided the foundation for their successful organic Blonde D'Aquitaine cow-calf operation. They sell grass-fed organic sides and quarters once a year in the winter, and also keep

donkeys, llamas and peafowl. They fell in love with farming, establishing an organic garden and planting hundreds of trees including a fruit orchard.

Donna says: "When people see my paintings I'd like them to appreciate the hard work that farmers do to put nutritious food on their tables. Yay for farmers!"

She paints with a group of five friends, known collectively as "Kaleidoscope", and has won numerous art awards for her exhibitions at art galleries, agricultural fairs, and horticultural exhibitions. She has exhibited at the King Studio Tour and King Museum, Daniel's Restaurant in Nobleton, The Aird Gallery and Canada Blooms. She also had a solo show at Skylight Gallery in Aurora. She was the subject of an article in Tapestry in the Spring 2009 issue. For the most part she prefers animal "portraits", close up head shots.

Donna will also paint commissions. Her original watercolours are around \$500 and 11" X 14" giclees are \$80 plus shipping. Her website is <http://www.donnagreenstein.com>.

—nfu—

Editor's note: In the last issue of the *Union Farmer Quarterly*, a photo was published of several delegates to the 40th national convention who were also present at the NFU Founding Convention in 1969. There were, unfortunately, some people at the 40th convention who met the criteria but missed the photo opportunity. Wilfred (Butch) Harder was one of those people who were not in the photo. If you know of others, please contact the NFU office and let us know.

union farmer quarterly

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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 Terry Boehm

Hello everyone. For many years our regulatory system has been expressly designed, and re-designed, to facilitate all the requirements of corporations in general and biotechnology corporations in particular.

We have a Competition Bureau with no teeth, and no inclination, to resist mergers and consolidations among these big corporations. This is not too surprising, given the fact that the original intent of the so-called “competition” legislation was never to actually prevent mergers and consolidations. The intent of the legislation was to simply threaten. The mere threat of an investigation by the Competition Bureau was supposed to be enough to end anti-competitive behavior by corporations.

Over the years, it has become all too clear that Canadian Competition Bureau investigations are nothing more than a formality in the process of mergers. We have seen the results in our meatpacking industry, with family hog and cattle farmers left out to dry. Potato farmers have the same experience with geographic monopoly processors. Western grain farmers have been dealing with powerful railways and grain companies for years. Biotechnology corporations are seeking to monopolize seed and are redesigning the regulatory system to facilitate even more rapid introduction of their varieties with as little scrutiny as possible. Our governments are completely complicit in this, having long ago decided that biotech equals innovation, and innovation equals prosperity.

Governments imply that this overall “prosperity” will eventually trickle down and help farmers prosper. It is here that the problems with Genetically-Engineered (GE) flax point out a very different reality. Farmers had to move

decisively 10 years ago to have Triffid flax deregistered and to have the seed destroyed. Our regulatory system at that time allowed it to pass with no regard for market consequences. Nothing would stop another variety of GE flax from passing again today.

Unfortunately the efforts of 10 years ago were not successful, and we have largely lost our European market for flax because of contamination with GE material. We are likely to have the same experience with other GE varieties in wheat and alfalfa if they are allowed to pass. A Private Members Bill, Bill C-474, introduced by Alex Atamanenko, is now before the House of Commons. This legislation seeks to address the problem of market harm by calling for an analysis of export market consequences before any new variety is allowed to be registered and grown.

This would seem entirely reasonable. What company would jeopardize its sales and potential profits, or even its financial solvency, if a market analysis revealed that the product it was trying to sell was something that was likely to cause the market to crash and burn? If nobody wants the product, why put it on the market?

Yet when the NFU advocates the kind of common-sense analysis being called for by this bill, we are labeled as “anti science”. The Conservatives even call the bill “anti-farmer”. Nothing could be further from the truth.

If we continue to blindly go down this path, with no regard to market harm caused by GE crops, the results are going to be very predictable. They’re also going to be very anti-farmer. We will all be bankrupt and the entire economy of this country will suffer. Is this responsible government? Or is it the role of government to transfer tax dollars to corporations via farm programs and carry on business as usual without regard to the economy? It appears that this is our reality in Canada. This does not make sense by anyone’s measure.

Terry Boehm, NFU President



A message from the...



Women's President

— by Joan Brady

Hi Everyone. I wish you a safe and productive growing season. I know for myself, after a long winter of too many hours spent in my office, getting out and working in the dirt will be welcome and just where I want to be.

It has been a busy winter and I have been able to connect with many NFU members and represent the NFU at various events. A recurring theme of conversation has been the increasing importance of connecting with eaters as a priority to build awareness of both the farm income crisis and the importance of agriculture to the social, environmental and economic landscape of Canadian life. Food Sovereignty is one way to frame that conversation.

Food Sovereignty as developed by Via Campesina is a vehicle to communicate the importance of everyone being involved in the decision making process when it comes to what food in Canada looks like. Food Sovereignty is about taking back the decision making power. The Declaration of Neyleni outlines a series of statements into 6 pillars that allow the intent and shift of focus to be easily understood and communicated. When expanded upon, these pillars enable the NFU and other like-minded folks to engage others in the process of seeking change.

The Pillars of Food Sovereignty:

- **Focuses on food for the people**
- **Values Food Providers**
- **Works with Nature**
- **Builds on Skills and Knowledge**
- **Localizes food systems**
- **Puts control locally**

The People's Food Policy Project is also based on the principles of food sovereignty and through a process of seeking grassroots submissions has evolved to the next step and a first draft will soon be available for review. The information has been organized into 10 chapters. Darrin Qualman, NFU's Director of Research has been lead of a policy writing team that deals with agriculture and science. The entire draft will be available at peoplesfoodpolicy.ca in early April.

In my role of Women's President, I am also intentional in keeping updated on the issues and policies that affect farm families throughout the country. In particular, I have been concerned with the recent developments in the Hog Sector. Farm families have adapted both their expectations and business plans over the years to meet the demands of an increasingly narrow hog processing sector. Increased debt and diminishing returns have increased stress levels and decreased capacity for risk throughout the province and country. Outside factors such as H1N1/Swine Flu have further impacted an already challenged sector. Short-sighted government response to pleas for assistance resulted in short-term loans that had to be paid back within the year although the sector had not recovered any momentum. Government then introduced the Hog Transition program to farmers desperate to either weather the storm or to exit with dignity.

A program in which Farmers compete with each other and where production is valued at the lowest bid is disrespectful and exclusive in the extreme. Farmers, rather than banding together during difficult times, are eyeing each other with suspicion and judging their neighbours' threat as competition to both stay in and exit the industry. Animal units have been valued as low as \$360 and as high as \$1040 – the determining factor – the nerve or desperation of the various bidders.

(continued on page 23...)



A message from the...



Youth President

— by *Kalissa Regier*

The Campaign for New Farmers makes its way across the Atlantic

This February, 25 young farmers from across Europe met in Geneva as a part of the European Coordination of La Via Campesina. The goals for the week ranged from exchanging farming ideas and getting to know other young farmers, to understanding the European Coordination of La Via Campesina and how it links to global organizations including the United Nations, the World Trade Organization and others. I was lucky enough to join in the discussions and communicate our work with the NFU Youth Campaign for New Farmers.

Starting Small to “Reclaim the Fields”

A similar project called “Reclaim the Fields” launched a few years ago by a small group of enthusiastic young farmers in Europe began with a few friends gathering in the countryside, discussing the major barriers they were faced with as new and upcoming farmers. These informal discussions continued and began to gain momentum. Today the semi-annual forums draw hundreds of young farmers and non-farmers from across the continent around topics such as getting young people established in farming, the need for agricultural policies that create a fairer relationship between industry and farmers and promoting food sovereignty across Europe.

Today, “Reclaim the Fields” has taken on a life of its own and has grown beyond the youth of La Via Campesina. It has truly brought young people together from all aspects of society who are searching for a change to the current systems in food, farming and trade.



Members of La Via Campesina youth gathered for a meeting in Geneva, Switzerland in February.

Bringing it Home

I was inspired by my experiences in Geneva and came home to meet with other NFU Youth in Nova Scotia to discuss the same problems we face here. The NFU Youth launched the Campaign for New Farmers in November in Ottawa and it continues to be a large part of our activities within the NFU Youth, but like our friends in Europe, there are too few of us and in Canada, we are too far apart. Our Campaign, like the European example of “Reclaim the Fields” must include all of our partner organizations and associate members from across the country. This coalition is essential for us, as we continue to diminish in size, to keep our voice heard and attempt to rebuild our food system.

To join our mailing list and receive updates on the Campaign for New Farmers, please send an email to me at kjregier@gmail.com

In Solidarity,
Kalissa Regier, Youth President



A message from the...



Youth Vice President

— by *Cammie Harbottle*

Since my initial introduction to the NFU board last convention, I have been working with Kalissa on various projects, including: a successful application for funding for the redesign of the NFU website, communication and organizing of the NFU Youth, and the organization, planning, and hosting of the Annual NFU Youth Workshop. I have also begun to network and recruit new NFU members in my local area.

This year, the youth caucus decided to move its meetings further east from Battersea to Nova Scotia. The meetings were held in my local community of Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia from March 4th to 7th. We had an energetic mix of existing and new young farmer and associate members and two packed days of discussions, planning, and sharing stories and food. Young farmers and associate members from across the country brought different perspectives on similar challenges and issues faced in their own regions and sectors and a common passion and enthusiasm for food and farming. Out of a series of formal and informal discussions over the weekend we were able to build connections and develop concrete action plans for the NFU Youth.



NFU Youth Workshop in Nova Scotia in March.

A main focus of the weekend was the Campaign for New Farmers; a campaign that aims to increase the number of new farmers in Canada, recently launched at the 2009 National Convention. Through much discussion, the group was able to further develop the objectives of the campaign and hash out short term action plans and long term goals to move the campaign forward (see page 17 for more details).

Though March in the Maritimes does not typically lend itself to farm tours, we were able to virtually tour each others farms through slides and presentations by many of the members and went out for all-you-can-eat pancakes and maple syrup at a local maple sugar farm. We also learned of a local alternative model of land tenure and farming through an afternoon and evening hosted by Waldegrave Farm and Tatamagouche Community Land Cooperative.

The group also discussed the role of the NFU Youth on both a national and regional level and committed to working to build the youth membership. As part of this drive, I would like to put the call out to the general membership to connect youth in their regions with us! If you know of any existing or potential young farmer members in your region, please put them in touch with Kalissa (kjregier@gmail.com) or myself (cammie@waldegrave.org) so we can bring them on board with our plans as the youth caucus.

As I look forward to another season at my own farm in Nova Scotia, I am also quite excited to continue to develop relationships with the NFU board and membership both regionally and nationally. I feel passionately about the work of the NFU Youth and the Campaign for New Farmers, and am committed to turning our objectives into actions over the next months and years.

In Solidarity,

Cammie Harbottle, Youth Vice President



Regional Reports



ONE (PEI)

REGION



- by *Randall Affleck*

The NFU in Prince Edward Island held a meeting with provincial

Agriculture Minister George Webster on February 25. The outcome was predictable, but it had to be done.

There are a lot of issues that we focused on, including the dire financial circumstances of farmers who raise beef and hogs. The closure of the fresh pork kill line at the Larsen's plant at Berwick will seriously aggravate the situation, since about 40 percent of Island hogs go to that plant. That translates into between 1400 and 1600 hogs, and will directly impact about 25 producers.

In addition, the plight of potato farmers in the province has become worse with the recent announcements by McCain's, and Irving-owned Cavendish Farms, that both companies are going to be cutting their potato purchases from farmers in the province by between 20 and 30 percent. That cutback represents a massive loss out of the farm economy. At least 12 growers who regularly contract with McCain's are going to be stuck. Another 20 growers who hold regular contracts with Cavendish Farms are in a similar situation. McCain's has instituted a similar cutback on potatoes purchased from New Brunswick farmers. Our Agriculture Minister, George Webster, stated that this was the "payback" year for potato growers, but the reality is that very little money has found its way back to producers.

We also brought up the need for the Lands Protection Act, touched on Crop Insurance issues, and trade. One of the sore points we have is that the Farm Registration program is not enforced, and there is a need to strengthen the linkage to provincial programs. We also discussed the issue of the lime subsidy, and the decline in the numbers of laying hens in the province.

In the dairy sector, there is a new Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT), which has implications for the dairy quota in the region. The quota cuts that are scheduled for April 1 of this year amount to between 1 and 3 percent. There is also a growing concern over the possibility of Johne's disease, and the dairy sector is working to come up with a strategy

for dealing with this. Johne's (pronounced "Yoh-nees") disease and paratuberculosis are two names for the same animal disease. Named after a German veterinarian, this fatal gastrointestinal disease was first clearly described in a dairy cow in 1895. A bacterium named *Mycobacterium avium* ss. *paratuberculosis* (let's abbreviate that long name to "MAP") causes Johne's disease. The infection happens in the first few months of an animal's life but the animal may stay healthy for a long time. Symptoms of disease may not show up for many months to years later. This infection is contagious, which means it can spread from one animal to another. MAP is hardy - while it cannot replicate outside of an infected animal, it is resistant to heat, cold and drying.

The NFU in Prince Edward Island recently completed its Fair Trade Report, which was done in cooperation with the Cooper Institute. This was a two-year project that was initiated as a result of a resolution at the NFU national convention. Watch for more details in the future.

There have been a fair number of Grand Plans and Commissions that have laid down pronouncements from on high in recent months. Among them was the Nitrate Commission, which has proposed mandatory three-year crop rotations. Currently potato production dominates the cultivated area, and there is a need to have other crops in the rotation. Another one was the Commission on the Land and Local Governance, which has targeted environmentally sensitive lands and also those zoned for agriculture use only.

Finally, the Commission on the Future of Agriculture in PEI released its final report. I was on that commission, and many NFU members put forward their suggestions to the hearings. The 52-page report of the Commission is available to download at http://www.gov.pe.ca/photos/original/af_commofagri.pdf. A total of 14 recommendations were put forward by the commission, but it's important to remember that there was not total agreement on these recommendations.

In Union, Randall Affleck



ONE (New Brunswick)

REGION



- by Betty Brown

Potato farmers in New Brunswick are struggling after McCain's Foods Ltd announced recently that it is cutting the volume of potatoes it buys in the province by 20 to 30 percent. It could mean a loss of about \$15 million in farm sales. Last month, McCain's also cut back on the volume of potatoes it buys from PEI farmers by 20 to 30 percent.

McCain's says the reason for the cuts is because of poor economic conditions, but at the same time the company is cutting back on potatoes grown in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, it is still importing sweet potatoes from the southern United States. It is unclear at this point if it will be cutting back on those imports. McCain's also apparently has a surplus of potatoes left from the 2009 growing season, so it's not in a hurry to replenish those stocks.

About half of New Brunswick's potato farmers have direct contracts with the company, but even growers who don't have direct contracts will be affected, as will all the farm input suppliers and other businesses in rural communities.

The crisis in the livestock and hog sectors is escalating with Larsen's decision to close its fresh pork kill line. A press release on the issue was issued by the NFU shortly after the announcement by Larsen's, and Jean-Eudes was interviewed by CBC Radio on the implications of the closure.

Our membership is increasing despite the loss of several farms in the past few months, and the likelihood of more farm failures in the coming months. The future of agriculture in New Brunswick clearly is jeopardy.

Meanwhile, the NFU has been hard at work in the province. We compiled, translated, printed and distributed two provincial newsletters since November, and there is another one in the works. We have our "Buy Local" campaign underway, which features bumper stickers, bookmarks, t-shirts, pens and rulers stamped with the "Buy Local" slogan and NFU logo. We'll be applying for additional funding in early April to keep the "Buy Local" campaign going.

We also have had quite a few hits on our NFU in New Brunswick website (<http://www.nfunb.ca>), which Barb Somerville regularly updates.

Barb also spoke on behalf of the NFU at the Dairy Farmers of New Brunswick annual meeting in Fredericton December 3.

Jean-Eudes Chiasson, NFU District Director, and I met with the Board of Directors of the New Brunswick Agricultural Council to discuss the application format for programs they administer for Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Jean-Eudes has also attended several meetings on the issue of Food Sovereignty.

Following the Agricultural Summit, the Ministers' Round Table on Agriculture was established. Organizations are not represented, but Barb Somerville and Jean-Eudes were both appointed as farmer representatives.

Jean-Eudes staged two demonstrations (at the Dieppe Farm Market in December, and in Roogersville in January) to increase the awareness of the seriousness of the financial crisis that hog farmer are facing. He has been interviewed several times by the media on the situation.

Harold Culberson and I represented the NFU in New Brunswick at the February 5th Potato Seminar in Grand Falls. The NFU in New Brunswick donated 5 safety vests as door prizes at that event.

On February 13 I attended a Fair Trade wrap-up session in Prince Edward Island. This project was initiated by the NFU in Prince Edward Island, and a final report has been issued.

Harold Culberson and Jean-Eudes Chiasson set up our NFU booth and attended the two-day New Brunswick Soils and Crops annual meeting on February 25 in Moncton.

Our third annual District Meeting was held March 20 in Floreenville-Bristol, with NFU Women's President Joan Brady as the keynote speaker, along with NFU Youth Vice-President Cammie Harbottle.

In Union, Betty Brown



REGION

THREE (Ontario)



- by Grant Robertson

By the time this *Union Farmer Quarterly* goes to print and you read this, I will no longer be the Ontario (Region 3) Coordinator. After three and a half years of neglect that sound you hear is our cattle mooing in glee. It was simply time for me to step aside and concentrate my energies on our family, our farm and some other projects.

It has been a real honour and privilege to represent the NFU and its members. I have always felt a keen and profound sense of responsibility to all NFU members and have tried, not always as successfully as I would have liked, to honour the number of men and women who founded this important and great organization. The last three and a half years as Coordinator have been a lot of work. Between collapsing beef prices, the state of the pork industry, government programming that is not working, the rollercoaster ride of grain prices, changing and over-zealous regulatory changes, the pressures the Green Energy Act is causing rural communities, and many other issues, there have been no shortage of issues to worry about. And worry about them NFU members have; but more importantly NFU members have worked hard to find solutions and identify the real problems causing these problems, not focusing on the surface excuses.

Although the workload on the Ontario Coordinator is extremely high and is really a full-time job, or actually more than a full time job, that work has not been my own alone. In fact I have played only a very small role. The number of NFU members who have been involved in this work are too numerous to mention, so I won't even try, but they range from grassroots members, Local officials, Regional Council members and National Board Directors. I do want to mention two people who have carried a tremendous amount of work within the NFU, but often go unheralded. Terry Pugh and Marion Watkins have done so much work behind the scenes that most of us have never seen that they really have moved this organization farther than we can ever thank them enough for.

People have been tremendously generous in helping me with my position. You have invited me into your homes, your lives and shared with your hopes, dreams and problems with me in a way I can never show enough gratitude for. I have been profoundly moved by people who took time out of their busy lives to drop me a line, or give me a call, or just come up to me at a meeting and say something nice about a commentary, or share a laugh with me. It is these simple kindnesses that make an organization worth belonging to, and given the quality of the members of the NFU this is truly a great organization.

If I can presume to give one piece of advice to the NFU as an organization it is a reminder that we must resist becoming an organization that is a self-selected club of true believers with a kind of orthodoxy loyalty test. We are not currently in danger of this happening, but we must always be vigilant against the temptation. The NFU is a big tent organization. A place that can welcome any farmer, regardless of where they are in their understanding of the dysfunction of our food system is one that can garner the strength to take on the powerful forces arrayed against us.

Of all the things I am proud about during my time as Region 3 Coordinator it is that, despite the powerful and well financed interests against us Ontario during those 3 plus years increased its membership by more than 17% per cent in those few years. Given all that is against us, including a multi-million dollar budget for one of the other organizations in Ontario, that speaks well for the Ontario team and the importance to family farmers of the NFU.

I wish all of you luck, perfect weather, and good prices. There I hear the cows calling, they are telling me it is time to get off the computer and get them some darn hay.

In peace and solidarity
Grant Robertson



REGION

FIVE (Manitoba)

- by Ian Robson

Region 5 (Manitoba) NFU met recently with Stan Struthers, the Minister of Agriculture Food and Rural Initiatives, and Bill Blaikie, the Minister of Manitoba Conservation.

In our discussions with Minister Blaikie, we discussed water drainage and the need for licensing and increased tree planting. There is also a need for sewage ejector regulation to only be in more densely populated areas or locations with seepage issues rather than province wide as at present. We also brought up the problems with wild boars and elk ranching.

The issues we discussed with Minister Struthers included the province's proposed vision for the future. We noted there is a need to understand the expectations of the public. We presented the Minister with a copy of the NFU policy statement and a copy of the NFU study entitled Crisis in Livestock. Livestock and Hog farm incomes were discussed and expectations are not being met from the markets. More local direct farmer to consumer food supply system would develop the Manitoba economy. This means help for local processing and local abattoirs to upgrade their standards to maximize their trade potential, and ways to help the public with healthy food choices and preparation. The Manitoba Cattle Enhancement Council is supporting local meat processing and needs to do more. We are not convinced that a livestock market income insurance scheme will be of any use to farmers.

We pointed out that the Federal Government needs to hear from the Manitoba Government regarding its support for supply management and for the Canadian Wheat Board. Current WTO talks could erode

domestic farm policy with not much to be gained at the farm gate. The Province was asked to assist communities to obtain short line railway services since there is more potential rail abandonment.

For over thirty years farmers have had money checked off their income to fund Keystone Agriculture Producers Association; we feel farmers should be able to choose to direct this check off to KAP or the NFU or to research. Each organization has done good work for farmers and contributes to farmer wellbeing.

We made similar comments to Manitoba Liberal leader Jon Gerard and hope to meet with Manitoba Progressive Conservatives.

Region 5 NFU National Director and Regional Coordinator Mr. Fred Tait retired after 17 years of skilled dedicated service to you the NFU member. His knowledge and ability is a strong voice for Manitoba farmers. Fred Tait has led on issues of farm environment, income for cattle and hog farmers, stopping the sale of Manitoba Telephone System, short line railways, grain transportation issues and many more concerns.

At the Region 5 meeting in June, 2009, I was elected to the National Board of the NFU. In November, 2009, I am officially now on the National Board as well as being the Regional Coordinator and I wish to hear from you about issues you feel are important. Please also express your views to your local MLA, MP, or Councilor and keep informed upon the issues.

The NFU is working with other organizations to campaign to elect directors to the Canadian Wheat Board who will support the interest of ALL farmers by ensuring single desk selling power is used to gain market revenue at the farm gate. Please continue your support in this effort by membership and by letters.

What is the value of unity through the NFU to your farm or to the country?

When you look at the success the NFU has had in farm policy you would see crop insurance programs, cash advance programs, marketing boards, and more. Farmers are concerned about their rising costs and could or have done lots to control these, but by organizing much more could be gained and it is never too late to start no matter how large or onerous the task might be-join with your neighbour now-join the NFU.

Look for your notice of the Region 5 NFU meeting this summer, please attend the meeting and voice your concerns.

In Union, Ian Robson



REGION

SIX (Saskatchewan)

- by Glenn Tait

Our NFU efforts in Saskatchewan since Convention have been targeted almost entirely toward raising our profile and selling memberships. Director Ed Sagan has had the most success at this having had a few letters to the editor published across the province and some ten or more new memberships sold. I have just had a letter (trimmed and edited by Terry Pugh) published in the March 4 *Western Producer* in which they removed all references to the NFU. They also removed about half of my list of evils perpetrated by the Harper Tories against the Canadian farmer. OK, I can see their point there, it was a long list.

In further pursuit of public awareness I have booked a booth at the Battlefords Agrimex on the second weekend in April and I'll have the sharp looking NFU wall behind me and a table full of news releases and publications in front. Hopefully I can sell more memberships there, or if not there, perhaps later over the phone as it sinks in just how under attack we farmers are. At our most recent board meeting in Saskatoon we had an excellent little trip to the farmer's market there. This summer I hope to return, perhaps with our display, to promote the NFU somewhere between the spinach and the new potatoes.

The Saskatchewan directors and available staff also have a meeting with provincial Ag staff on April 12 in Regina. We may learn things about each other. The province has so far successfully avoided attention on its' position on important issues like the dismantling of the CGC and the CWB and the market distorting packer control of the beef industry by concentrating on the more immediately showy bounty on coyotes. With nearly double the average number of coyotes killed in the province calves should be safer this spring but I wonder if the lack of cull pressure on the deer herd will result in greater incidents of Chronic Wasting Disease.

Our Region 6 annual meeting is in Bruno on June 22nd and 23rd. I hope to see you all there.

In Union, Glenn Tait

Report by Dixie Green, Region 6 Board Member:

In District 3, a banquet was organized in Waldeck with Stewart Wells speaking briefly to the concerns he sees facing the farm population. Stewart had announced his stepping down as president of the NFU after 8 years as leader and was thanked by the group for his exemplary service to the NFU.

One meeting was held on January 10th with members hearing reports from the Ottawa convention and discussing priorities for action. An annual convention is planned for April 10th in Cantaur. Harold Blodgett is filling in for Ron Watson, president, while Ron attends to health concerns.

As a new member of the National Board I will act as liaison with District 6. I researched the process for refund of the cattle check-off and submitted information to the office for distribution of this information. The information was not published in the *Union Farmer* this year but may be useful for next year when the same process will apply. I have also phoned many on the lapsed membership list and talked to many farmers about joining the Union.

WANTED**FULL-TIME OR FULL-TIME SEASONAL**

Big Dog Seeds has a full-time or full-time seasonal position available. We are looking for an experienced, motivated, responsible, safety conscious male or female with good communication skills and a keen attention to detail. Work will include all aspects of seed production from seeding to harvest. This position will not involve seed plant operation. Class 1A license preferred. Non-smoking environment. Competitive compensation package.



Email resume with references to:

bigdog.farm@sasktel.net

or fax resume to: 306.483.2321

**Please contact Wayne or Lori at
306.483.2963 (Oxbow, SK)**



REGION

SEVEN (Alberta)



- by Margo Staniforth

It is hard to believe that we are already into spring, as things have been busy in Alberta for the NFU. Here are some highlights of NFU activity in the province:

Fellow National Board Member Doug Scott and I have decided to focus on membership for Alberta. Several news columns that I wrote, and which Terry Pugh edited, have made good press in large, urban publications to connect with the people we feed.

A Brochure and Bumper Sticker plan has been put together to promote the NFU and raise awareness on farm and food issues. The stickers will be for sale through locals to provide locals with funds to encourage NFU projects applicable to their area.

Doug Scott took the lead on the crop insurance brief presentation to the Alberta Financial Services Corporation head office in Lacombe in late January.

Iain Aitken reports that the Alberta Beef Producers AGM in Calgary in December had resolutions calling for a ban on packer ownership of cattle and implementation of parallel legislation with the US to end packer ownership/captive supply. These resolutions, unfortunately, were all either defeated or sidelined to committee level. They were not presented to the delegate body.

In January, Nilsson Bros., sent a threatening letter to the Northwest Consolidated Beef Producers, warning that unless the group stopped marketing cull cows they would no longer bid on the co-operatives fed cattle show lists. The matter was resolved later but no-one involved with NWCBP will go public on the issue or how it was resolved.

The federal budget in March largely ignored agriculture. Producers were told that AgriStability program will provide adequate compensation for losses incurred due to historically low cattle prices, record drought and record high feed costs. However, the continued liquidation of the cow herd tells a different story. Meanwhile, it was announced that the packing industry will receive \$50 million to help them create better solutions to the SRM disposal problem created by BSE. Another \$25 million will go "to support processing plants that handle cattle over 30 months of age."

Jan Slomp and Dale Fankhanel have been involved with the raw milk issue currently in Region 3. A supply management committee has been formed and ongoing discussion is taking place through conference calls. We don't want to lose ground on a marketing board that has been well established in dairy.

Ken Eshpeter is now the poster child for farmers who can work together, gather substantial funds and save a rail line! June 18th is the planned launch of the success of this project. Jan Slomp felt encouraged by this, and subsequently arranged a meeting at the Hoadley Hall on March 18th to investigate other potential projects that could be explored through farmer cooperation.

Funding at the NFU is always an issue and although membership is critical to the survival of this organization, the workload always exceeds the funds available. Currently the NFU is running at a deficit that could be easily dug out with consistent, small donations by many. Is the work of the NFU worth the price of going out for coffee a couple times a month? \$10 per month per member would go a long way. If everyone did that across Canada, the NFU deficit would be cleared. Not everyone has time to volunteer – but a small donation would go a long way for those who are. Please make Joan's day at head office and call 306-652-9465.

I would like to establish an email list to contact NFU members directly to save on the expense of paper, postage and time. Please call or email me with your contact information to get a list established for Region 7.

I am looking forward to meeting many more of you in upcoming meetings. Please plan to attend and participate.

In Union, Margo Staniforth



Sean McGivern elected NFU Ontario Coordinator

Sean McGivern, a 31 year old mixed farmer from Desboro in Grey County, is the new Regional Coordinator for the National Farmers Union (NFU) in Ontario. McGivern, along with Colleen Ross of Iroquois and Ann Slater of Lakeside, were elected to the NFU National Board during the NFU's regional meeting in Stratford on March 20.

McGivern, who previously served as NFU Local President for the Grey County Local, is a young farmer who operates a thousand-acre certified organic farm. He has a 50-head cow-calf operation and a 25-sow farrow-to-finish operation, in addition to raising sheep, hens, turkeys and ducks. Along with his crops and livestock, he also has an on-farm store, a flour mill, and a cereal-manufacturing business called Grass Roots Organics.

McGivern says he is looking forward to working with the rapidly-growing NFU membership throughout Ontario, and across Canada. "It's important to bring new ideas and new perspectives into the discussion on farm issues," he said. "It's especially critical to ensure that the voice of young farmers is heard. We are at risk of losing a whole generation of farmers and we need to put policies in place that will turn that around."

Delegates to the NFU Ontario Regional Meeting in Stratford paid tribute to Grant Robertson, who stepped down from the NFU National Board at that meeting.

Colleen Ross previously served several terms as National Women's President of the NFU. Colleen also currently serves on the Management Team of the People's Food Policy Project as well as being a Steering Committee Member of the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network.

Ann Slater has served as Secretary-Treasurer of the NFU Perth/Oxford Local. Ann has also has been President of the Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario and is a board member of the Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada.

The NFU Ontario Regional Meeting heard two major panel presentations: one on the financial crisis confronting pork producers, and the other on alternative energy and the effects of wind power turbines on farms and rural communities.

—nfu—

Important Changes regarding renewing your Farmers of North America membership

Farmers of North America (FNA) is a membership-based organization whose mission is to "Improve Farm Profitability". FNA members can access reduced-price pesticides, fertilizer, oils, parts, livestock supplies, and other inputs. To find out more about FNA, please visit www.fna.ca. **NFU members can enjoy a \$150 discount on an FNA membership.** This is a cost savings that will make your NFU membership **FREE!** To participate:

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NFU members will be required to supply their NFU membership number and expiry date. Remember, to save on your FNA membership, you must be a current NFU member.



Nothing “free” about “Food Freedom Day”

—by Margo Staniforth

Friday, February 12 has been dubbed “Food Freedom Day” in Canada. Apparently, this is the day when the average Canadian has earned enough income to pay their grocery bill for the entire year.

Given the level of inequality in Canadian society and the growing number of food banks across the country, I wonder whether the average Canadian consumer is really that well off. Certainly the average farming family is not. “Food Freedom Day” illustrates how much farm families in Canada subsidize food production through unpaid labour, off-farm jobs and high debt loads. Farm families are taking a loss while retailers, processors and other big corporations in the food system are making profits.

The point is, should we be celebrating the fact that farm families are underpaid? It’s such an accepted part of our culture that we mistakenly think of it as normal. We even extend the privilege of poverty to anything connected to farming. The other day I received an e-mail from one of the curators of the Grain Academy and Museum, located in the heart of downtown Calgary. It’s dedicated to the preservation of our agricultural heritage and aimed at educating future generations about farming and the farm movement. This important institution is so starved for funds the curators must job-share to keep this museum going.

Rural Alberta is being assaulted. We have lost hundreds of grain elevators over the years, and now we’re losing rail lines as well. Meanwhile, those of us left in the smaller communities must contend with the intrusion of all those “facilities” that are not wanted in the big cities: things like waste treatment plants, nuclear power plants, 500 kv electrical transmission towers, oil and gas wells, and big wind turbines. It’s as though everyone but the farmer has a say in what the land should be used for, particularly when the government passes legislation that gives corporate

predators more legal rights than landowners. They wouldn’t dare attempt these same stunts on homeowners in Calgary or Edmonton.

Many farmers have joined together to turn things around. We’re working to restore market power to farmers. It’s not that we are looking to increase the price of groceries – we’re simply trying to ensure that the farmers keep their fair share of the consumer’s food dollar.

Canada was built on a foundation of agriculture, but we see, on a daily basis, the ongoing loss of farm families’ heritage, culture, land, income and ability to retire. Ironically, policy makers in Ottawa and provincial capitals still expect that the wealth generated from farms will continue to fuel the country’s economic recovery. I’d like to ask them: “How are things at NASA?” because they must all be rocket scientists.

Our county has estimated a loss of 100,000 cattle off local farms during the cattle crisis since 2003. The “BSE Crisis” ended years ago when the border re-opened, but cattle prices have not recovered. Maybe that’s because only two packing companies control 85% of the Canadian market. It’s the same with hogs. We have numerous million-dollar pig barns devoid of pigs in our county too. My neighbours just sold the last of their cattle this week at a substantial loss. They phoned us to see if we wanted to rent their land from them because they were no longer fighting for farming or their community. They are no longer producing food for you.

Happy Food Freedom Day, Canada. —nfu—

Margo Staniforth is the Alberta Regional Coordinator of the National Farmers Union, She farms near Eckville, Alberta.



No Farms – No Beer. Now that gets your attention!



—by Margo Staniforth

A couple of items caught my eye recently. One was a TV ad for a well-known beer company, showing a field of ripe grain, while a voice-over showered praise on Canadian farmers for growing great barley. It made a direct link between the quality in the field and the quality of the brew.

The other item was a story in the January 14 edition of the *Western Producer*, where Preston Manning and Toronto Mayor David Miller both advocated bridging the gap between rural and urban communities, and finding common ground for farmers and city dwellers.

Now, I don't see eye-to-eye with Preston Manning on more than a few things, and I wouldn't recognize David Miller if he stopped and asked directions, but I have to admit I found some of the things they said made sense. Preston Manning acknowledged that environmental concerns are legitimate. He suggested restructuring the federal agriculture department by creating a new "Department of Rural Affairs" that focuses on rural communities, and stated that the term "farmer" is better than "agriculture" because it is "friendlier" and less industrial-sounding. David Miller laid claim to being a farm kid by virtue of his roots, and added he saw the situation from "both sides of the fence."

That struck a chord with me. I grew up in Edmonton and I've been farming for over a decade now. As a child, my experience with farms was limited to visits to my grandparents' place. But there is a big difference between visiting a farm and running a farm. For one thing, my grandparents didn't have to sign a bank document for a debt load that would gag a goat.

But I ended up chuckling to myself, as I continued to read about how farmers needed to communicate better and build bridges. It occurred

to me that the whole point of farming is to produce food – and that important point was not even mentioned.

Our family farms feed everyone in the cities. We produce the food eaten by millions of Canadians and millions more around the world. Some of the earnest environmentalists who ponder whether farmers really are stewards of the land should also consider the fact that many farms are over 100 years old, and our families have fed their families for generations without ever looking them in the eye or receiving a thank you. I think that makes farmers quite friendly. There is no question the vast majority of family farmers are exemplary stewards of the land. They understand that healthy soil is essential. Without their ongoing efforts, very little food would be produced due to severe soil fatigue.

It's sad that many people don't know where their food comes from. It's even sadder they don't know what goes into their beer. That's why I think that commercial showing the barley field was smart. But the reality is that it takes more than a thirty-second TV spot to educate people about the very serious crisis facing Canadian farm families. We are losing a whole generation of young farmers. We are losing family farms – not just one-by-one, but by whole sectors. Look at how many hog farmers and cattle producers have gone broke in the last couple years while the big packing companies pad their profits. Urban people need to understand that if we lose our farms, we lose the ability, as a nation, to feed ourselves. And by feeding ourselves, I mean the beer, too. No farms, no food. No farms, no beer.

—nfu—

—Margo Staniforth is the Alberta Regional Coordinator of the National Farmers Union, She farms near Eckville, Alberta.





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NFU Youth meet in the East

—by *Cammie Harbottle, NFU Youth Vice-President*

Between March 4th and 7th, the NFU Youth met in Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia for our annual workshop and gathering. We were welcomed by a biting wind and spring snowstorm which gave way to sunny skies and warm days. We were a group of eleven, including local adult educator and facilitator, Camille Dumond, with representation from five of the regions. Five existing NFU members attended and we were fortunate to welcome five new members (two associate, three farmer) into the NFU. Participants included existing members Paul Slomp (Alta. and Ont.), Caitlin Hall (Ont.), Terran Giacomini (Ont.), Kalissa Regier (Sask.), and myself, Cammie Harbottle (NS), and new members Alex Fletcher (BC), Virginie Lavallée-Picard (BC), Matt Eagleson (Ont.), Stephanie Hughes (NB), and Hillary Lindsay (NS). We were also joined by local farmers Tyrel and Chad Murray, and Becky Sooksoom of the NSDA. Many thanks to Regions 1 (PEI and NB) and 3 (Ont.) for providing funding for regional participation!

Our objectives for the meeting were to: get to know the diverse strengths, perspectives, and experiences we each bring to the work of transforming the system of food and farming in Canada; strengthen and better define the role of the NFU Youth in Canada's food and farming systems; learn from each other and local farm and food initiatives and practices; develop concrete plans, regionally and nationally, for the NFU Youth in 2010, including the Campaign for New Farmers; and continue to build our network of support and collaboration among members.

After community building and introductions to the NFU Youth and the NFU more broadly we were able to get into the dirt of the meeting. We discussed the internal functioning of the NFU Youth and better defined our roles and responsibilities within the NFU and as young leaders involved in food and farming in Canada.

Outcomes of this discussion included the creation of a voluntary International Program Committee (IPC) youth liason who will



NFU youth members from across Canada met in Nova Scotia in early March.

communicate with the IPC general and La Via Campesina and convene conversations within the youth regarding opportunities for our participation on an international level. Terran Giacomini volunteered for this position and will be looking into possibilities to send NFU Youth to the LVC North American Regional meeting in Mexico, July 2010. Kalissa will be sending out information on regional meetings and coordinators to facilitate communication and regional participation of youth members and efforts will be made to engage youth on local levels. We also developed strategies to remain connected and maintain momentum until we meet again next convention.

Much energy and enthusiasm was generated around the Campaign for New Farmers and a significant portion of our meeting time went into developing the campaign and establishing a concrete action plan for the coming year. We were able to translate objectives into actions pertaining to overall coordination of the campaign and in the three focus areas of the campaign: communications and media, education and mentorship, and policy. As the campaign is intended to be something larger than the NFU Youth itself, the group decided to search for outside funding to hire a campaign coordinator who could take on the bulk of the research and development and take the campaign to the next level.

(continued on page 23...)

Asparaginase, a genetically-modified enzyme, should not be approved as a food additive

Asparaginase, a genetically-modified enzyme currently used as a chemotherapy drug to treat leukemia, should not be approved as a food additive by Health Canada, says the National Farmers Union (NFU).

In December, 2009, Health Canada posted a notice on its website of a proposal to amend the federal *Food and Drug Regulations* to permit the use of the genetically-modified enzyme, Asparaginase, in food products. [http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/consultation/init/_2009-asparaginase/prop-asparaginase-eng.php] Public response to the proposal was limited to a 75-day, website-only “consultation” period, which expired February 21, 2010.

The NFU sent a letter to Health Canada on February 18, 2010, recommending that Asparaginase not be approved as a food additive. The NFU also called on Health Canada to undertake independent testing to determine the long-term health effects of Asparaginase as a food additive, to extend the consultation period, and to allow additional public input on the issue.

NFU Alberta Coordinator Margo Staniforth said there is significant potential public risk associated with the use of Asparaginase as a food additive, while the proposed benefits are negligible.

While Health Canada claims there are no public health or safety concerns associated with Asparaginase, that assessment is based on information submitted by the manufacturers of the enzyme. Two companies, Novozymes and DSM, own the intellectual property rights for this form of Asparaginase, and have begun marketing the compound in the US, Australia and other countries where it is already approved for use as a food additive. Asparaginase is claimed to reduce the likelihood of the formation of acrylamide in baked or fried food products.

Synthetic acrylamide is a carcinogen which is widely used in industrial processes like cement-making, pulp and paper, oil drilling, ore processing, permanent-press fabrics and dye manufacturing. It is present in tobacco smoke, and is also used as a “soil conditioner” in conjunction with many herbicides. At high levels, such as those found in industrial uses, acrylamides have been found to cause cancer.



The presence of acrylamide in food was first detected in 2002, but it is unknown if this “naturally-occurring acrylamide” has always been present in foods. In addition, the levels of acrylamide in baked or fried foods vary widely.

Starchy foods such as French-fries and highly-processed potato chips are the most likely to be affected, but even in these foods, the levels are extremely low. Injecting Asparaginase into foods is claimed to “reduce”, but not eliminate, the risk of acrylamide formation.

However, Asparaginase itself is risky, as Margo Staniforth points out. “Asparaginase is not a benign or harmless substance. The most widely-prescribed form of this compound is an anti-cancer drug that is marketed under the trade name of Elspar and manufactured by the pharmaceutical giant, Merck and Co. The drug is used to treat leukemia and works by starving tumour cells of needed nutrients and slowing tumour cell growth.” She said Asparaginase is a drug intended for a specific purpose – namely to combat leukemia and other lymphatic cancers. “The risks associated with this drug are many and potentially very serious. However, the drug is justified when it’s administered under highly-controlled conditions, to combat a deadly disease like cancer.”

(continued on page 23...)

Elimination of CGC Assistant Commissioner positions part of larger agenda of deregulation of grain industry

The elimination of all six Assistant Commissioner positions by the Harper government will further weaken the regulatory powers of the Canadian Grain Commission (CGC), and make farmers more vulnerable to the big grain companies, says Glenn Tait, Saskatchewan Coordinator of the National Farmers Union (NFU).

The six Assistant Commissioner positions were cut by Treasury Board President Stockwell Day on March 8 as part of a move to eliminate 245 government-in-council appointments. Day claimed the cuts were designed to save the government about \$1 million. However, any savings are illusory because the positions were vacant.

Tait pointed out the cuts to the CGC, even though they are lumped in with many other agencies, are much more serious because they are part of a larger strategy designed to deregulate the grain industry. The government has tried on two occasions since 2006 to pass legislation designed to amend the *Canada Grain Act* to remove regulatory protections for grain farmers and weaken quality standards for Canadian grain. In both those bills, the elimination of Assistant Commissioner positions was included. Assistant Commissioners are appointed by the Governor in Council under Section 9 (1) of the *Canada Grain Act*.

Assistant Commissioners were first appointed when amendments were made to the *Canada Grain Act* in 1929. Those amendments were aimed at making the Board of Grain Commissioners (as the CGC was then known) more accessible, and at strengthening enforcement of the provisions of the *Canada Grain Act* in the countryside. Assistant Commissioners checked elevator scales, ensured fair weights and measures, educated elevator agents about the legal requirements of grading and weighing grain, and intervened on behalf of farmers to ensure fairness.

The Assistant Commissioners have proven their worth through the decades, said Tait, adding

that eliminating the positions is “penny-wise and pound-foolish”. While the government claims it will save “millions”, it will lose many more millions through deregulation as a result of mis-graded grain and lost sales due to declines in quality standards. The grain companies, meanwhile, will be increasingly able to manipulate the system to their own benefit.

“It’s all well and good to debate what kind of a job we want the government to do, but if this government keeps slashing programs and staff, there won’t be anything left to do any kind of a job at all. It’s another example of the government starving itself into impotency,” he said.

Tait also pointed to the example of Australia, which deregulated its grain sector in an effort to increase sales. But as the reliability of the grading of their export grain declined, so too did the price. “Australian grain is now discounted, while Canadian grain still earns a premium,” he said.

The CGC Assistant Commissioners have proven their worth over the years,” stated Tait. “They have been individuals who have taken their jobs very seriously. They have all demonstrated integrity and knowledge of the *Canada Grain Act*, and the industry in general. Farmers have been well-served by their efforts. There have been many instances where the intervention of the Assistant Commissioner has resolved disputes fairly.”

Tait said the Assistant Commissioners’ role goes well beyond liaison and communications, and have acted as advocates for farmers. “This is an integral part of the job,” he concluded. “The mandate of the *Canada Grain Act* is to regulate the grain industry in the interests of producers. That’s the only way to ensure fairness in the marketplace. It’s unfortunate this government appears intent on turning back the clock to the 19th century by deregulating the grain industry and letting grain companies get away with whatever they can.” —nfu—



NFU urges improvements to Alberta Crop Insurance Program

Alberta's provincial crop insurance program is useful and effective, but there is room for improvement, says the National Farmers Union (NFU).

In a presentation to the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation (AFSC) in Lacombe, Alberta, on January 26, NFU National Board member Doug Scott said the provincial crop insurance program needs to be more responsive to farmers' requirements. "There is universal acceptance among farmers for the need for increased coverage at lower cost," he said. "The escalating price of essential farm inputs, including seed, fuel, fertilizer and chemicals, has severely cut into farmers' operating margins."

He urged the AFSC to retain and expand the Spring Price Endorsement (SPE) component of crop insurance. He said many farmers are taking advantage of this option to insure against the roller coaster swings in market prices for insured commodities.



Doug Scott

Scott also urged that changes be made to the "yield averaging" component of crop insurance to more fairly compensate farmers for high input costs. He pointed out that under yield averaging, a portion of a farmer's crop may be wiped out, but if the rest of the crop yielded above average, that may negate any coverage on the damaged portion. Meanwhile, the farmer could still face a substantial loss.

"This is especially true in the case of farmers who have widely-separated fields," stated Scott. "A hailstorm, frost or damaging wind can decimate one field, while another field with the same type of crop several kilometers away will escape the damage unscathed. Farmers should not have to be put in a position where their good crop is used to cover the damage to the poor crop. Yield averaging and spot-loss provisions need to be linked

together. Farmers should at least be able to recover the costs of their inputs on crops that are severely damaged."

Doug Scott was accompanied at the meeting in Lacombe by former NFU Board members Jan Slomp and Dale Fankhanel. NFU Alberta Coordinator Margo Staniforth of Eckville, who was unable to attend the meeting, said the AFSC should build on the positive aspects of crop insurance coverage, such as spot-loss hail coverage (Hail Endorsement) and the Spring Price Endorsement. She suggested modifying the crop cost equation under the Hail Endorsement program to allow farmers to be compensated fairly if input costs rise sharply after crop insurance premium rates are already set. Under the current system, farmers must absorb the higher input costs, which leads to cash flow problems.

She said a similar cash flow difficulty arises when payments from crop insurance claims are delayed, adding that any improvements to the system to speed up delivery of payment would be welcomed by farmers.

The NFU delegation pointed out that with the loss of the Kernel Visual Distinguishability (KVD) system for identifying different classes of wheat, farmers are concerned they could be held liable if a shipment of grain is contaminated by a misrepresented variety. Farmers may also be at risk financially if they buy a seed variety that is misrepresented by a seller, and consequently suffer lower yield and/or quality.

Other potential changes to the Canadian Grain Commission (CGC), such as the loss of inward inspection and the loss of grain company bonding and licensing, could also shift the burden of liability onto farmers, and therefore onto provincial crop insurance programs, as well. The NFU advocates that the CGC's regulatory role be retained and strengthened, thereby easing the potential costs to farmers and crop insurance agencies.

—nfu—



Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

It is not uncommon to hear farmers complain that we are not being paid enough for our production. And if you ask them how much is enough, they don't have a ready answer. We should stop thinking just about ourselves. Instead, we should think about our young people and plan for them. If we establish workable prices and conditions for them we will be well looked after and with a future. We wouldn't have to borrow any part of what should have been our paid earned income.

We won't need deficiency payments from governments. We won't have to read in the papers how governments are subsidizing farmers several millions of dollars. We won't need off-farm jobs or investment income to subsidize the farm. How do we get there? We do a cost of production (COP) for a starting farmer. We don't cut any corners because that doesn't do the businesses any good that have new equipment they want to sell us. We set one price for Canada based on anywhere it is reasonable to grow crops and livestock. There is no need to worry that it is more costly to grow crops in one area than another because income tax will take care of any excess income in the less costly areas.

The main thing is to have a price that allows all farmers to live comfortably. It is not necessary for some to suffer hardships for others to do well. That kind of thinking comes from having lived in the jungle too long. You ask how do we get to establish a COP for starting farmers knowing there are many robber barons wanting to cheat us out of our income that we have earned?

The first thing we do is get all items needed to produce crops listed on paper stating the price of each one, the labour and inputs that go into an annual harvest and equipment used tells you the COP. Nothing is donated. We are now business people, expecting to be here next year. We publicized the highest COP from across the country and that's the price except where something unusual happened. Then it's insurance to the rescue. Now that farmers and consumers know the country-wide price, it will help bring us together to stop racketeers putting unnecessary cost on the farmer. A good example was taking away the Crow rate for hauling grain on the railroad. COP would have stopped that.

Also, once we have established a COP price we can work to eliminate unnecessary costs that aren't justified being there. One such cost is buying and selling farm land. Nobody is making it so nobody had an expense along that line. It is unreasonable to expect the consumer to buy the land all over again every time it changes hands. Of course, the lending institutions like the land to be sold many times. So let's do the right thing and pass the land from the retiring farmer to the new farmer using the tenure system with no cost. Just sign it over. Doing so would lower the COP considerable. There are two things wrong in our economic system that cause it to fail. One is the farmer not being paid their earned COP from the marketplace. The second is the illegal interest bearing debt money system. The constitutional supreme law orders the federal government to create 100% of Canada's money supply and spend it into circulation debt and interest free. Stop the banks from creating any because it is illegal and the people are forced to borrow it into circulation as an interest-bearing debt owed to the banks.

So to kill two birds with one stone, we should order our federal government to buy our farm production at COP, paying for it with constitutional money. This will provide an avenue for getting new constitutional money into circulation which at the same time having our farmers being paid their full earned income for the first time. Also using this debt-free constitutional money will not cause inflation as does bank-created money. In fact it will replace all the inflationary money so prices will return to normal. When that happens, farmers can get their COP from consumers through the regular markets. Banks must never again be allowed to create money. Every loan the banks make must be backed dollar for dollar with depositor's constitutional money.

If we are to save the family farms, we must act now and get this COP in place. Some may think it's a bit high but it is absolutely essential for getting and keeping our young folk on the farm. Look at what the alternative is. It is multinationals taking over our farms as they bankrupt us. And if you want to eat, you're their slave. Their food price will make ours look cheap.

*In Union is Strength,
Tony Riley, Strathclair, MB*



We Remember ...

EARL RASMUSON



Earl Rasmuson of Camrose, Alberta (formerly of Gwynne, AB) passed away while on vacation in Mexico, February 24, 2010 at the age of 67. Earl left a legacy of caring community involvement and leadership, in farming, with family activities, and in politics. He recently retired from farming in Gwynne with his brother Keith after a lifelong commitment to agriculture. As a young adult he joined the Farmers Union of Alberta. He graduated from the Olds School of Agriculture in 1962. Later Earl served as the local Farmers' Union of Alberta President and District Director. Earl was a member of the National Farmers Union (NFU) since 1975 and he also served as a NFU district director and national board member. When his children were younger, he supported their efforts in 4H, was a 4H leader, and he was active as the Wetaskiwin Ski Club President. Two years ago, Earl joined the Camrose Daybreak Rotary club and had agreed to stand as President elect.

Earl became a New Democrat as soon as he could at the age of 21. He served as the Constituency President (Wetaskiwin Camrose). He ran as a Provincial candidate 3 times. Earl worked on several federal and provincial campaigns, most recently as the official agent for the 2008 Crowfoot NDP campaign and during which time he also managed to help local candidate Gerald Pilger run as a district director for the Canadian Wheat Board election. He sat for one term on the Provincial executive and served as the Agricultural committee chairperson, advising Derek Fox, the NDP agricultural critic in the NDP caucus under Ray Martin and then later for Grant Notley. Earl was honoured with an Alberta New Democrat Life Member Award in September, 2009.

Earl brought a friendly warm glow to any room with his solid, cheerful determination, and quick sense of humour. He is survived by his wife Pam and two children, Shelley and Ryan, and brother, Keith (Dianne), Sister Karen (Michel) D'Aoust and families. He was predeceased by his parents Clarence and Doris, brother, Ralph and niece, Heather.



ERIC SALT — Eric Salt, a founding member of the National Farmers Union and a long-time member of the Saskatchewan Farmers Union, passed away peacefully on February 8, 2010 at the Lloydminster Hospital at the age of 97 years. Eric was born in Lloydminster and lived here all his life except for his time spent overseas in WWII and a six year sojourn in Saskatoon in his later years. Eric was principled and dedicated to helping others. If he saw a need, he would do all he could to meet that need, and then quietly step aside. Dignity and kindness marked his life.

He farmed in the Southminster District for many years, and was very community minded. He was instrumental and worked with others to bring surface rights to Saskatchewan, develop the Saskatchewan Hog Marketing Board, envision the Legion Ball Park, add the top to the original Legion Hall, help start the Southminster Curling Club and build the rink south of town which provided many hours of enjoyment for the rural community, both young and old. He was president of the Senior Citizens' Society just prior to the building of the Legacy Centre, and instrumental in bringing Handi-van Service to Lloydminster, as well as starting the Community Clinic of which he was administrator for several years. Eric was involved in the Saskatchewan NDP, the Saskatchewan and National Farmers Union, the Hog Producers Association, and was honored as Toastmaster Of The Year in the 70s. He leaves to mourn his passing his wife, Marie; sons Ed (Donna), Reg (Heather); daughters Fran (Ken) Hartle and Anne (Ron) Stirling; six grandchildren; eight great grandchildren; and several nieces and nephews.



JOHN MICHAEL CLAIR — It is with great sorrow and shock that we announce the passing of John Michael Clair on December 31, 2009 in Saskatoon after a 2 year fight with cancer at the age of 62 years.

John was a long-time NFU member who strongly believed in orderly marketing. He served as an elected member of the Board of Directors of the Canadian Wheat Board, and also served as President of the Saskatchewan Soil Conservation Association.



RUSSELL AND LINNEA MOEN — Russell and Linnea Moen of Colonsay, Saskatchewan both passed away in 2009 – Russell in January and Linnea in December. They were long-time members of the Saskatchewan Farmers Union and founding members of the National Farmers Union. They will be sadly missed by family and friends.



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

The real harm, however, has been the lack of consideration of how and what the hog industry should look like. Seventy-five million dollars could in effect reduce the sow herd by 200,000 (\$360) or 72,000 (\$1040) based on the high and low bids. Some regions, the Maritimes in particular, have lost most or all of their hog farmers and in turn lost processing capacity and feed grains market. The effects will be long reaching and permanent and markets left empty will in all likelihood be seized by out of country suppliers.

It makes me wonder at how the industry would have fared had it been limited to current levels ten or

so years ago. What if we matched production with domestic demand; limited the influx of foreign pork and avoided the seeming opportunities that global markets represent but where the rewards go to processors and distributors rather than the producers. What would the Canadian hog industry look like if it valued food providers and eaters, if it was organized and controlled on a local level, if it worked with nature and looked to a future that included young producers? Food for thought – but it may be too late.

In Solidarity,

Joan Brady, Women's President

(NFU Youth meet in the East, from page 17)

Engaging new farmers in the NFU and, more specifically, in the Campaign for New Farmers, was identified as one of the most important initial steps. Participants will be working on local and regional levels to identify and engage new members and would appreciate the support of the general membership in doing so. We will also continue to develop campaign materials, including a web page specific to the campaign, and will be putting together a plan and package for orienting new members.

The first step in relation to the education component involves identifying existing agricultural education and mentorship opportunities in Canada and making this information available in a comprehensive way on our website. The group

identified the main challenges faced by today's new farmers and, in line with the NFU mandate, will be advancing research and development into key policy areas. Specifically, over the next months, members of the group will be working on policy pertaining to land access and tenure and financing for new farmers.

Though we did spend a good amount of time sitting down to work, we made time to share photos and stories from our respective farms, visit to a local maple sugar farm and pancake house, partake in a tour and evening hosted by Waldegrave Farm, and hosts a wine-and-cheese social with local farmers and food supporters.

Overall, it was a weekend of good food, good work, and good company! We look forward to our next meeting.

—nfu—

(Asparaginase should not be approved..., from page 18)

She said the approval of genetically-modified Asparaginase as a food additive is not justified, given that the levels of acrylamide formation in food are extremely low. She urged Health Canada to undertake further research into the origins of acrylamide formation in food, and to study whether any links exist between acrylamides in the environment and polyacrylamides contained in herbicides such as glyphosate.

Staniforth said Health Canada should adopt the “precautionary principle” and not approve any drug or food additive that has not been thoroughly

proven safe. “The onus should not fall on the public to prove that the drug or food additive being considered is dangerous or harmful,” she concluded.

The NFU letter to Health Canada is available on the NFU website at www.nfu.ca/briefs/2010/NFU%20Comments%20regarding%20Health%20Canada's%20proposal%20to%20permit%20the%20use%20of%20asparaginase.pdf

The NFU website can also be accessed at <http://www.nfu.ca> and click “Briefs and Policy”. —nfu—



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NFU 41ST Annual Convention **December 2nd to 4th, 2010**



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