

THE union farmer

QUARTERLY

Summer 2011



Vol. 17 Issue 2



NFU Youth from across the country gathered in BC for the fourth annual youth workshop, March 2011.

(Left to right) Back row: Mike Kozlowski, Ian Stutt, Blake Hall, Alex Fletcher, Andrew Jansen; Middle row: Paul Slomp, Farrah Carter, Cammie Harbottle, Seann Dory, Jordan Cochrane; Front row: Kalissa Regier, Coral Maloney, Lisa Lundgard, Virginie Lavalée-Picard, Coral Sproule

Message from the Editor...



Kevin Wipf

All my life I have peered up at the big number "1911" painted in white at the top of the doors to the loft of our old barn at my family's farm. That date has always seemed so long ago. I have often wondered what it must have been like to

build such a huge structure, without the benefit of the

modern tools we use today. I am told that all of the neighbours lent a hand in its construction, and the favour was returned to each of them when they built their own barns each subsequent summer. These barns are not only picturesque parts of the rural landscape, they are monuments of our history as a nation. They have always been the focal point of the family farm, and serve to bind the farm neighbours and generations of farm families over time.

This year, of course, is the 100th anniversary of the construction of our barn. Sadly, it is much worse for wear than we'd like. The excess moisture and snow of the last two years has taken its toll. I lament that its end might be near. Yet for the time being, it continues to watch over the farm and all of the hard work and toil that has always gone on there. Indeed, it is incredible to think of all that it has seen. From the work of my great-grandparents in building the



homestead, to my own family, that barn has seen the changes from animal power to machine power, from candles to electricity, from scythe to swather, from thrashing machine to combine, and so on. Over the years the farm has produced milk, honey, furs, beef, wheat, barley, corn, mustard, and more. Oh the stories that barn could tell.

Barns such as ours are an important reminder of all that farmers have in common, from one corner of our great country to another. They symbolize the hard work, commitment to the land, and cooperation that has always given farmers their strength.

This spring the old barn will watch over another planting season. Spring is always a season full of optimism. Let's hope that this summer will bring good fortune to all family farms across the country.

I encourage you all to think on these things the next time you look at your own barns and other farm structures.

In Solidarity, Kevin Wipf

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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.



Cathy Holtslander joins NFU staff

Hello NFU Members! I have been working as the Director of Research and Policy in the Saskatoon office since March 7. I am very much enjoying my new position, and I would like to officially introduce myself to you.

I have been an NFU member for 11 years, and have attended almost every Convention during that time. If you are also a Convention regular, we may have already met, at least in passing. Until last year I was an associate member. In 2009 my partner Lyle Orchard and I began farming, and last fall we harvested our first crop on our farm near Mont Nebo, Saskatchewan, so we are now voting members.

I joined the NFU because I share your belief that informed, motivated and determined people working together can and do bring about positive change. I also believe that how we produce our food is fundamental to a society – economically, socially and ecologically. If we are empowered to make the key decisions around food and agriculture, we can prevent big corporations from taking over our food system. The NFU has always been a strong voice promoting policies that empower farm families and I am very much looking forward to making a contribution through the work I can do to support your democratic efforts.

I have worked for non profit organizations since 1997. Most recently I worked for Beyond Factory Farming, an advocacy group that promotes sustainable livestock production in Canada. Before that I was the Executive Director of the Saskatchewan Eco Network, which brings together environmental groups in Saskatchewan. I have also been an active volunteer in the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate, the provincial umbrella group for certified organic farmers and their supporters, including taking a key role in the organic farmers' legal action against Monsanto and Bayer between 2000 and 2007. Since 2008 I have been on the Board of GRAIN, which is a small international non-profit organization that works to support small-scale farmers and social



Cathy Holtslander, NFU Director of Research and Policy.

movements in their struggles for community-controlled and biodiversity-based food systems.

I got into the non profit sector work after getting my Masters Degree in Adult and Continuing Education. During the course of my studies I became more interested in working in a social movement instead of going back into the formal education system. I did my thesis on Annie Hollis, who was a leader in the Saskatchewan Grain Growers Association and the United Farmers of Canada between 1916 and 1933. These organizations were predecessors of the National Farmers Union. The farm movement history I learned while writing my thesis has provided a strong foundation for my own advocacy work, as well as a humble appreciation for the hard work, perseverance and dedication of earlier generations.

I am looking forward to working with you as we confront the many serious economic, social and ecological issues that face us as farmers and as citizens. I also look forward to meeting you as friends, neighbours and colleagues in this special community that is striving to make Canada a better place for family farmers and for the people we nourish with the food we produce.

—nfu—



A message from the...



National President

—by Terry Boehm

Greetings. I would like to start off by thanking all those who donate to the NFU. Your contributions are greatly appreciated and are of a substantial help.

We have just gone through a federal election and the Conservatives now form a majority government. There is no doubt that key elements of the agricultural landscape will come under focused attack. The CWB comes to mind first, as well as the Canadian Grain Commission. CETA negotiations will proceed with all of the threats to local food systems that it entails, as well as the threats to people and seeds that expanded intellectual property rights will bring. The need for the NFU is stronger than ever.

One of the core strengths of the NFU is the fact that it is a national organization, which takes in all regions of Canada except for Quebec. The NFU was the coming together of several provincial farmers' unions that recognized that issues of a national character needed to be dealt with by a strong national organization. Political strength was gained by a national organization. The NFU had its founding convention in 1969. We have now been a vigorous voice for farmers' economic and social justice for 42 years. Another fundamental strength is our Constitution. This was carefully crafted by our founders, based on their experience with democratically directed farm organizations. Positions at the national level were created for women and youth so that they would have a strong presence in the organization as well. Our twenty-member National Board consists of twelve men and eight women. Our nine-member National Executive consists of five women and four men, of which two are youth.

The NFU Constitution very carefully lays out how policy is developed through a resolution process, where resolutions are ultimately debated and adopted by a majority vote at our annual national convention. The debate on resolutions is also carefully chaired, and uses

the rules as published in the book Parliamentary Procedure At A Glance by O. Garfield Jones. Resolutions come from the regions and districts, as well as the convention body and the board. They are debated there, and the input of all people from across the country help to shape and refine them into what ultimately becomes part of our policy. Officials and the Union as a whole, including the regions, districts, and locals, are then directed and guided by the policies adopted at the national convention. Some may object to the term *directed*, but what should be understood is that the process allows for all to have input right down to the local level into the shaping of that policy. We have had 42 years of careful and reasoned debate, which defines our policies. We have the option of changing, evolving, and refining our policies through this process every year, which we do. What gives us strength organizationally is this well defined process that everyone can understand, and needs to understand.

From time-to-time we have a few people who dispute policies, but they need to use the force of their arguments through this process to reshape policy. If they go outside of this process and openly defy NFU policy, they do nothing more than weaken the strength of the national body and undermine the strength of the NFU. We are attacked constantly for our positions from outside, but every member of the NFU knows that we are not threatened or intimidated from stating our case and arguing for the betterment of farm families.

We are a Union with diverse elements from across the country, which helps to invigorate and inform us to conclude our policies and do our work. Let us not forget that "In Union is Strength." The strength of the NFU is that national voice and the ability to lend the support and power of that national voice to issues that may be only regionally important.

Terry Boehm, President



A message from the...



Women's President

— by Joan Brady

I have long been interested in leadership training and theory. When I made the transition from full-time farming to part-time farming and the world of work, I intentionally decided that my focus for employment should build on the 25 years I had spent in various aspects of the agricultural industry. It made sense, then, to include the ability to impact my chosen field in my re-training plans. I successfully applied to participate in the Ontario Advanced Agricultural Leadership program (AALP).

AALP is administered by the Rural Ontario Institute and is an 18 month executive development program that offers leadership training, insight into various agricultural topics, and the chance to network closely with the 38 other participants. Through a series of seminars and a North American and International study tour, participants are introduced to a wide range of topics and new ideas. Our class was quite diverse, with farmers from various sectors and a good cross-section of government and industry personnel. The whole experience was very rewarding, and I formed friendships and developed a better understanding of agriculture and the nuances of leadership.

Leadership, in my opinion, is not about being in charge or about making everyone agree with me. As a leader, my goal is to facilitate the leadership in others, building consensus and positive working relationships to move an organization forward. I am not someone that necessarily needs to be heading the charge all of the time. Instead, I am always glad to share both the responsibilities and the acclaim to build the skills in others, and to develop fully any organization that I have been

involved in. My experience has been that I have received as much as I have given.

I really appreciate the wisdom of the founding members of the NFU that deemed it necessary to put in place the Women's and Youth positions. My mandate as NFU Women's President is to ensure the participation of women and to make sure their skills and perception are available at every level of the organization. It is not the same in other agricultural organizations. The most recent census states that 25% of farmers are women, but in most national farm organizations they are under-represented. There are no women on the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, only one out of 18 at the Dairy Farmers of Canada, and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture has 3 on their roster of 20. Most other national and provincial farm organizations are the same.

I used to annoy the organizers of various hog industry events that I attended (I was one of only a handful of women in attendance), by stating on the evaluation form that only 1/2 of the farm management team was in attendance and that they should consider measures to allow more women to participate. It is well documented that there are more barriers to a women's participation in farm meetings. We can be proud of all the women represented on our local, district, regional and national boards. We need to continue to support and facilitate their participation to the benefit of the NFU and the farming industry.

In Union,

Joan Brady, Women's President



A message from the...



— Cammie Harbottle

Youth President and Youth Vice President



— Paul Slomp

While snow flew in other parts of the country last March, 14 NFU youth from across the country gathered in balmy Saanich, British Columbia (BC) for our fourth annual NFU Youth Meetings and Workshop. The past three annual meetings were held in Laird (SK), Battersea (ON), and Tatamagouche (NS), respectively. This year, we were drawn to the west coast of the country for three main reasons: first, we had not yet held an annual youth meeting in Region 8; second, through correspondence last fall with youth member and urban farmer, Seann Dory, and associated organizations we became aware of the vibrant networks of young and urban farmers in the coastal region; and third, we saw this area as great potential for building NFU membership and strengthening the voice from this unique farming region at the National level.

After sending out an invitation to the meeting, we were thrilled, because for the first time we received more applications than we could accept! There was much interest and, thanks to the support of the National Farmers Foundation and the NFU regions, we were able to bring a diversity of farmers to the meeting, including: Farrah Carter and Cammie Harbottle (Region 1); Corral Sproule, Ian Stutt, and Paul Slomp (Region 3); Coral Maloney (Region 5); Andrew Jansen and Kalissa Regier (Region 6); Blake Hall and Mike Kozlowski (Region 7); Lisa Lundgard, Alex Fletcher, Virginie Lavallee-Picard and Seann Dory (Region 8).

The meeting took place over three days. The first day was focused on the internal organization of the NFU Youth. We had three principle objectives: first, strengthen the participation in and build the capacity of the NFU youth and the NFU in general; second, continue organizing a nation-wide young farmer movement; and third, focus on building an NFU youth structure that will allow us to work together regionally and nationally from our own farms. A

diversity of experience and perspectives and a whole lot of positive energy made for dynamic and effective meetings. We were able to build on the previous work of the youth, and develop a positive direction for this year. Much of our discussion focused on developing a national identity as the NFU youth, while building local and regional capacity on the ground. There was a lot of energy and enthusiasm from delegates, who were eager to get back to their regions and connect with other young farmers and existing NFU members to strengthen the organization from the bottom up. Communication, both internally and externally, was also identified as a key area of work for the coming year. This will include building on the current Campaign for New Farmers blog (<http://nfuyouth.wordpress.com/>) to share our stories, post events, articles and ideas; increasing our online presence through improving the NFU website, including the youth page, (a project currently underway by the NFU National), and developing/updating post card/brochures type information to give youth the capacity and confidence to reach out to new youth members.

The second day of our West Coast adventures included a beautiful ferry ride over to Salt Spring Island. We were warmly welcomed by John and Su Wilcox of Duck Creek Farm, who gave us a tour of their farm and an introduction to Island agriculture. We organized a public meeting at the Salt Spring Island Farmers Institute, and again received a very big welcome, warm soup, and a receptive audience. Members of the Institute, the island's Agricultural Alliance and the Salt Spring Island Farmland Trust, presented on the many agricultural initiatives underway there, including a new community abattoir and the "Plan to Farm" project. After a presentation on the NFU and the NFU youth to a receptive audience, we rounded out the afternoon with inspiring conversation, including much enthusiasm for developing a local NFU presence!

(continued on page 7...)



After the public meeting on Salt Spring Island, the NFU youth returned to Vancouver Island and hosted a “Young Farmer Mixer”. A number of young and start-up farmers, and a few NFU members from the region, joined the NFU Youth at the Pendray House for a relaxed evening of great conversation, fantastic snacks, and some young farmer mixin’.

The final day of meetings was focused on building alliances with other organizations involved with young and urban farmers in the region. There was much discussion around the collaboration of these organizations with the NFU youth nationally, but more importantly within the region. The meeting created a space for dialogue between groups with a diversity of skills, experience and expertise around working together to build both the young farmer movement and the National Farmers Union. It was a conversation that would be wonderful to emulate in regions across the country!

In reflection, the weekend was a great success! For me, it clearly reinforced the importance of the annual face-to-face meetings of the NFU Youth. There is something that comes from sitting in a room with young farmers from diverse farming backgrounds and regions of the country, that you cannot get from a conference call. And this was not just any group of young farmers - it was a group of passionate,

educated, inspired, and innovative young farmers doing remarkable things, each in their own communities. Over the weekend, we built strong personal relationships, strengthened our identity as the NFU youth, and developed a positive direction for the year to come. Additionally, we have built ties with local farmers and organizations in the coastal communities of Region 8, and are seeing concrete results of these relationships. Over the past month, several farmers in the region have been in conversation with our Region 8 youth and National board and staff members, and are in the midst of working on the potential of a new district in Region 8! Very exciting!

Again, a huge thank you to the NFU National board and staff, all of the regions, and the National Farmers Foundation. We could not have done it without your support, and it is a critical part of building the future of this organization. And if it is anything like the faces at this meeting - the future is bright!

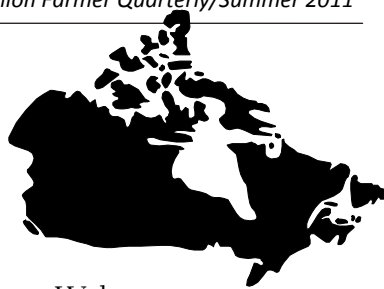
In Union,

Cammie Harbottle and Paul Slomp



NFU Youth on tour at Duck Creek Farm, Salt Spring Island, during the fourth annual NFU Youth Workshop, held in BC, March 2011.

Regional Reports



REGION

ONE (PEI)



- by Randall Affleck

NFU President Meets with PEI Premier Ghiz to Discuss CETA

In early April, an NFU delegation, led by NFU President Terry Boehm, met with PEI Premier Robert Ghiz, Minister of Agriculture George Webster, the Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning Alan Campbell, and their senior staff to discuss the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement between Canada and the European Union. Mr. Boehm covered areas of procurement, patent extensions, precautionary seizure sections and a general discussion regarding the role of governments. He explained how the traditional role of government is to democratically represent the interests of civil society. However, governments today are increasingly engaging in secretive trade negotiations, which serve to further empower corporate interests. In this role, governments are primarily acting as a backstop, paying fines to corporations for deviations in trade agreements.

The Premier felt that an agreement was a long way off yet. Premier Jean Charest was the primary proponent for CETA within Canada. Protection of supply management and new market access for Island fish and potato products into Europe, were the Premier's primary objectives. He was not concerned about the procurement sections, because he felt with PEI's small size a lot could be done within the limits of the proposed text.

Regarding patent protection, Agriculture Minister George Webster discussed "the other side of the story," stating that the government was hopeful that new varieties of fusarium resistant wheat and higher yielding barley could be grown on the Island, providing a more profitable rotation crop for farmers.

District 1 Convention

About 40 members of the NFU met on April 5th in Cornwall, Prince Edward Island for their annual

convention. Guest speakers were Hon. George Webster, Minister of Agriculture, Scott Sinclair, a senior research fellow with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, and NFU President Terry Boehm.

Several resolutions were debated regarding the sale of ungraded eggs, crop insurance, bee importation, and roof snow load damage.

The District elected a full slate of Directors this year. Elwin Wyand returned as District Director, Edith Ling returned as Women's District Director, and a new Youth District Director, Megan MacCallum, was elected.

District 2 Convention

Members of the NFU in New Brunswick met on April 16th in Moncton for their annual convention. While I was unable to attend, several Islanders travelled over and were very impressed with the meeting.

The Convention theme was "Back to the Future: Food Security and Farm Prosperity Using the Rear View Mirror". Guest speaker Dr. Susan Machum, National Chair for Rural Justice at St. Thomas University in Fredericton, NB, spoke in the morning, and there was a panel in the afternoon discussing the challenges of local food.

Jean-Eudes Chiasson and Sally McGrath were re-elected as District Director and Women's District Director and Farrah Carter was elected to Youth District Director.

Collective Bargaining

The NFU on PEI has completed collective bargaining negotiations for fuel with Island Petroleum for the coming year. An agreement on fertilizer has yet to be completed but discussions are ongoing.

Meeting Nova Scotia Cattle Farmers

A group of cattle farmers in NS are interested in learning more about the NFU, and have invited us to make a presentation to their meeting on April 26th, 2011.

(continued on page 23...)



ONE (NB)

REGION



- by Betty Brown (photo)
& Barb Somerville

Winter is usually a time when farmers attend meetings, catch up on paperwork, and plan for the spring. However, in New Brunswick, with the never ending snow storms, much time was spent plowing snow – to the point we ran out of room to put it!

The weight of the snow proved too much for some farm buildings and dozens of roofs collapsed. Many farmers found out their insurance did not cover their losses. The NFU in NB sent a letter to Premier David Alward requesting provincial assistance for these farmers. The national office assisted us in issuing a media release, and Betty did an interview with CBC Radio in Moncton and Saint John. To date the only response has been a letter stating the Premier is referring the matter to the Minister of Agriculture.

NFU members from PEI and NB manned our booth at the Maritime Farm Mechanization Show in Moncton and a table at the ACORN conference in Fredericton, March 10-12th. NFU in NB's booth was also present at the provincial Soils & Crop Improvement Association's annual meeting in Woodstock, NB. Our new farm signs were available free to NFU in NB farm members at all of these locations.

NFU in NB members participated in meetings with the NB government on several occasions, including:

- with our new Minister, the Hon. Michael Olscamp and staff, including the new Deputy Minister of Agriculture, to discuss ways to reduce spending and to improve performance within the department
- with staff from the Dept. of Finance and Agriculture to work out possible improvements to the Purchaser's Permit for tax exempt fuel at the Minister's Round Table on Agriculture meetings throughout the winter
- District Director Jean-Eudes Chiasson was very busy with NFU work all winter. Among other meetings he attended the budget release of the new PC government in Fredericton in March and the Atlantic Growing Forward consultations in

Halifax, also in March. Chiasson also wrote full page commentaries in February, March and April for the NB French daily newspaper *l'Acadie Nouvelle*.

- Youth member Farrah Carter of Sackville attended the recent NFU Youth meetings in BC.

The Spring 2011 issue of the *NB Family Farmer*, our quarterly newsletter, included an official invitation to attend our annual district meeting. Work is proceeding on our new website.

The April 1st (April Fool's Day) snowstorm forced the postponement of our annual district meeting. We rescheduled on April 16th at another location in Moncton. Just one of the 5 panel members originally booked to speak about the challenges of local food on April 2nd, was able to attend on April 16th. Fortunately other individuals ably filled in, to make for a successful panel.

Dr. Susan Machum, National Chair for Rural Justice at St. Thomas University in Fredericton used our theme, "Back to the Future: Food Security and Farm Prosperity Using the Rear View Mirror", to eloquently lead us through a history of farming in NB from the 1940's to today. Dr. Machum outlined how top-down government policies have dictated where we are now, and she stressed how important it is that farm policy be developed from the bottom up. She concluded that engaging with consumers to make changes will prove beneficial to both farmers and consumers.

Our "local food" panelists presented their views on developing local markets, interacting with the consumers, and their experiences growing the products consumers want, and they expanded on the benefits of buying and eating locally grown food. Other business included a new scholarship for children of registered agriculture producers, and a proposed increase in farm registration fees. Elections were held for the 2011 year. Jean-Eudes Chiasson was elected unanimously as District 2 Director/President; Sally McGrath was acclaimed as Women's Director, and Farrah Carter was elected Youth Advisory; Barb Somerville agreed to serve again as secretary. Our treasurer and co-treasurer of the last four years have resigned and the new treasurer is Joan LaPage-Tompkins, effective in May. A new co-treasurer, preferably living in the same area, is being recruited. We hope to have a half-time executive director in place by the end of May and have applied for funding for a summer student. —nfu—



REGION

THREE (Ontario)

- by Joe Dama (photo)
& Ann Slater

Region 3 Convention - March 5, 2011, Guelph

Congratulations to Laurretta Rice, Secretary-Treasurer of Renfrew Local, the first winner of an annual award to recognize long-serving NFU members in Region 3. The theme of the convention was 'Who Has the Power?' Policy resolutions were passed on predator control, GE alfalfa, time-of-use electricity rates, labelling of GE food and a new entrant program for chicken quota.

Waterloo Wellington Awards Banquet

The Waterloo-Wellington NFU Local handed out three awards at their AGM and Banquet on March 25 in Elora. The banquet featured local food prepared and served by Centre Wellington District High School students.

The Barn Preservation/Restoration Award is given to a property owner who has preserved and/or restored a barn. The winners of the 2011 award were David and Elyse Chapman of Adept Farm. Other nominees were Donald (Buck) and Joyce Ross and the Wrights. *The Future Farmers Award* acknowledges and celebrates the future of farming in Waterloo and Wellington. The 2011 winners were Chris and Jen VerVoort of 5-Star Livestock. This award had the most nominees, which hopefully speaks to a bright future for farming in Waterloo and Wellington. The other nominees were Monique Blais, Cody Leitch, Robert Swackhammer and Val Steinman. The third award is *The Sustainable Farming Award*, which was accepted by Gavin Dandy on behalf of Everdale Farm. This award is presented to a farmer or a farm family who works in concert with natural eco-systems. The other nominees were Karen Hunsberger and family and John Rowe Family Farm.

Renfrew Local Comments on Ontario Budget and Risk Management Programs (RMPs)

The Ontario budget, announced March 29, included an extension of the Grains and Oilseeds

RMP, a new RMP for pork, cattle, veal and sheep and a self-directed RMP for horticulture. Details on the new programs are few and far between, but many farmers are pleased the budget earmarked some funds for agriculture.

Renfrew Local President Dave McKay made the following comments in the press, "The NFU believes programs are necessary for the short term. In the long term, the NFU will try to convince the provincial government to work with producers of various commodities, to advance solutions for acquiring sufficient returns from the marketplace. It must be noted, that historically the family farm experience has been that previous programs were unable to sufficiently compensate for income losses at the farmgate."

Activities in other locals

Local 316 received a grant from Frontenac County to develop a feasibility study/ business plan for a new poultry abattoir. Initial results of the study indicate the region's farmers are definitely interested. The final report of the study will be available at <http://nfuontario.ca/316>.

NFU booths were set up at farm shows in Lindsay, London, Ottawa, Chesley, Drayton, and Quinte in March and April. Several locals held their Annual General Meetings in February, March and April, with workshops and discussions on CETA, GE alfalfa, and creating a local seed bank.

Recent Regional Activities

The NFU now has a representative on the Agriculture-Wildlife Conflict Working Group and regional council submitted comments on the Agriculture-Wildlife Conflict Strategy to the EBR Registry. Several Ontario national board members spoke about the need for a policy that puts domestic food first at the Growing Forward Consultations. We are supporting the Women's Institutes in their ongoing campaign and work to save small abattoirs. In response to requests from members in Dufferin County, the NFU spoke out against the mega quarry application in Melancthon Township.

Regional Coordinator

Joe Dama has been appointed the interim Region 3 Coordinator. Joe and his wife, Beverley have farmed in Essex County since 1972. For most of his life Joe has been involved in the NFU, holding many positions at the local, district, region, and national levels. —nfu—



REGION

FIVE (Manitoba)



- by Ian Robson

The Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) bargains with all buyers to sell our wheat and barley for the best prices available. Farmers realize this service is a negotiation of terms of sale with all buyers and is a benefit to ALL farmers that is worth keeping.

The CWB Lake Freighters, like the CWB Rail Cars, are a big win for ALL farmers in cost savings on servicing the markets – whether you agree or disagree with the CWB. I am sure that even flax and canola will travel to market in these utilities. Let's celebrate this CWB purchase even though the federal government did not extend longer term repayment as part of this deal.

There are risks and costs involved in selling by Fixed Price Contracts, including risk of price change. So, pick a price -any price- and then live with that price. The tried-and-true Pool Price will over time be the same as one's own (genius guessing) about when to sell on the daily pricing. Rate your success at selling cattle or canola. The USDA studies have found that producers mostly end up selling in the lower half of the price average, based upon actual sales data and data for prices offered. How smart are informed farmers? If a farmer pays \$2,000 per year for market advice, is it good advice? One adviser uses the term 'harami' to describe chart signals as to when to sell. The word appears in the dictionary next to the words 'harakiri' and 'harangue,' and appears to be just a word picked to cause confusion over a past price chart squiggle. If you are picking a price today, you are not negotiating for the level of the price to become higher, and this is the farmer's problem. You are only accepting the price that is presented to you. It is why farmers must have off farm jobs.

Speaking of canola, the Manitoba Canola Growers Association has been asked by its own members to negotiate with the CWB to find potential canola buyers who would prefer to purchase from the CWB. Could this be of benefit

to farmers? This idea is an option with merit because there are buyers who do not use the exchanges, and it is legal to sell direct outside of the exchanges. If farmers are in control of their tonnes and wish for better prices, then doing better negotiating would get better prices by avoiding the inefficiencies of the exchanges. Canola also has very high basis level, up to \$90/tonne to Vancouver, much more than CWB grains. Why? Risk to private elevators and traders of price change is high, so basis includes at times very big levels. This is a cost to farmers. Also, the Canola Futures Contract is 8% dockage - so is there extra dockage added at port - we get deducted and then dockage gets resold handsomely?

Farmers of North America and your local Coop are negotiating for our input business, and help reduce our costs. Unfair fertilizer, seed, and fuel costs get that way because of suppliers working together with legal patents to up our costs.

In 1975 a half ton truck cost approx \$5,500, and it would take 11 finished steers at \$500 each to buy the truck. In 2011 a half ton truck cost approx 40,000, and it would take 29 steers at \$1400 each to buy the truck. In short, we know our profit level is less and our debt level is higher than in the past, so we need to take action to gain back our profitability. Stabilization programs will not help us. We need profitability from the markets.

World Trade Organization (WTO) deals appear to be causing reduced profitability. Indeed, there is over 15 years of evidence showing this. The WTO also threatens the borrowing ability and single desk selling of the CWB, and the continuation of Supply Management. In Manitoba we are concerned that small scale abattoirs will have to meet federal inspection standards, and they need help to reach this level so they can help farmers supply local markets. (There are concerns that federal standards are becoming just paper audits and these caused the listeria problem in 2008.)

Loss of a generation of farm youth is of big concern. The NFU Youth hosted a workshop to explore issues to help retain the number of skilled farmers upon the land. We have many NFU youth in Manitoba who wish to farm, and are eager to learn how to work with other farmers on the negotiating that is needed to get better pricing and policies. We encourage young farmers to attend the NFU meetings and participate with your ideas.

You will read this report after the May 2, 2011 Federal Election, in which Canadians will choose



their leadership. Please vote with knowledge, and then follow up to see that our government is held accountable. Please write to your government representative to help the NFU express your concerns.

The Hudson Bay Route Association held its AGM and points out that Churchill needs full Ice Breaker and Coast Guard services to assist shipment out and inward. The CWB helps ensure that shipments are made to advantage via Churchill.

Short Line Railways (SLR) owned by farmers are being organized to save the rail service. SLRs work to save up to \$1,800 per producer car shipped. Producer cars are a right held by farmers, and get first crack at delivery. So if you want extra revenue, consider use of producer cars. Why give money to elevator companies?

Remember the black box to identify the variety of grain delivered to the elevator that was promised in the 1990's as being available in 2 years? We are still waiting...

We wish that you have a safe and successful 2011 season.

—nfu—

Region 5 Annual Convention

Saturday, July 16th, 2011

Onanole Seniors Drop-In Centre

Onanole, Manitoba

Convention will commence at 1:00 PM

and adjourn at 5:00 PM.

Registration fee: \$10.00/person

A Potluck Barbeque will be held after the convention. Please bring your own barbeque meat, entrée, refreshments, cutlery, and lawn chairs.

You are welcome to bring written resolutions to guide NFU policy and actions.

For more information, please contact:

Ian Robson at 204-858-2479 or

Bev Stow at 204-745-3252

SIX (Saskatchewan)

REGION



- by Ed Sagan

I first want to thank my Executive for appointing me Regional Coordinator for Region Six. I hope I can fulfill my mandate. I would like to wish Glenn Tait all the best in his candidacy in the federal election. I have definitely enjoyed working with Glenn over the past several years.

I attended two Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) meetings, in Melville and Wynyard. I am happy to say that the majority of farmers attended with a positive attitude. The meetings went very well and were very informative.

On April 12th, I attended the District Convention at Cantuar Hall near Swift Current. Dixie Green and Stewart Wells were also guest

speakers. My presentation was about increasing NFU membership in Saskatchewan.

I am asking every NFU member in Saskatchewan to sign up two new NFU members. It is actually not very hard to sign up new farmers. There are new farmers who would like be members of the NFU. I signed up one of the biggest farmers in my area, and I also signed up a young 22 year old farmer. You have to show there is an alternative to these huge, chemical-dependent farms. The latest research shows that the most effective farmer today is farming without chemicals and synthetic fertilizers. Who is really benefitting from this kind of chemical-dependent farming? Multinational corporations have gold windows on their buildings, and very little consideration for people on the ground levels. Always use the booklet published by the NFU called *Working for Farm Families for 40 Years*. There is very valuable information in that booklet.

I still write letters to open forums. I still phone open line radio shows. I hope every member would do the same. We have to keep our NFU at the forefront in the public eye.

—nfu—



SEVEN (Alberta)

REGION



- by Jan Slomp

As I write this report we are still looking at a foot and a half of snow in the field. Spring will be late and the choices for many farmers regarding what to seed will be limited. We have been unfortunate on our farm, as on January 14th we found that 5,500 square feet of the roof on the free stall area of our barn collapsed under 8 feet of snow. With a lot of help from neighbours and NFU members from further away, we created emergency provisions and cleared rubble. While four other dairy farmers around our town lost cows when their barns collapsed, we miraculously did not lose any. I developed an additional sense of awe for our cows. A few of them, while we were cutting them loose from the entrapment, were cool-headedly chewing their cud. Our milking parlour and feed alley were still standing. We cleaned out a hay shed for temporarily housing the cows. Despite more snowfall and low temperatures since the collapse, we were able to rebuild, and on March 31st we had the cows back in the free stalls.

Farm Insurance

We were dismayed to learn that our insurance was not covering the damage to our barn. Reading through the small print of our policy, finding almost in every sentence the words “perils insured”, “exclusions”, and “compounded exclusions”, I did wonder what the \$6,000 in annual premium actually did cover in terms of losses. In my 32 years of farming, I cannot ever recall having read the insurance policy. We farmers typically leave the details to the insurance broker, as the word “broker” implies that the agent looks after one’s need in exchange for a fair premium. As we have learned the hard way, I would urge all NFU members to have a close look at their farm insurance policy, and to test your broker’s commitment to your end of the stick. Our broker completely failed us, as we were

unable to draw any funds. To make matters worse, he had the nerve to bill us for extra premium, since he had “heard” we were rebuilding and insurance premiums are typically higher during construction. We ignored the additional billing.

Battle River Railway

On April 7, the farmer-owned Battle River Railway New Generation Coop had its first annual meeting in Galahad. Each member of the board of directors was given a “to do” list 12 months ago, to make the railroad operational. At the meeting, each board member gave a personal account of all of the actions he/she had taken, from covering legal angles, required technical training, negotiations with the main rail companies, and government to logistics and track maintenance. You name it, a detailed report was given. After all of the presentations were given, the membership expressed its awe and deep appreciation by a standing ovation for the board. For this current winding down crop year, the projection is that 800 cars will be shipped. Side line business is developing, lowering operational cost. For example, the locomotive that is owned by the Coop moves cars on request by Cargill on their siding near Camrose. Other potential business is arising as well. With so much rail freight, lowering the Government of Alberta’s expense on road maintenance, it is surprising that local Conservative MLA’s cannot be bothered to show enthusiasm for the new railway.

Euphoria in Beef

After several years of declining herds, it is no surprise that farm gate prices are up. Compared to a cull price of 40 cents one year ago, things look good now with that cull being close to 80 cents. Check-off organizations, beef magazine reporters, and ministers of agriculture are euphoric again about the market.

It is only a few months ago that Nielson Bros and Cargill received \$30/head federal government funding, for the extra costs in their operations from the removal of BSR risk material. A cost that these companies have recovered twice, as the costs were already subtracted from the price they paid farmers for the beef to begin with. The Alberta government paid several million dollars to Cargill for upgrading the plant in High River, and to Neilson Bros for refurbishing their plant in Brooks last winter.

(continued on page 23...)



Growing Food Sovereignty in British Columbia

One of the highlights of 2011 for the NFU so far, has been the bond formed between local farmers in the Vancouver-Vancouver Island area of British Columbia and NFU members. In March, the NFU Youth held their annual retreat on Vancouver Island and Salt Spring Island. Then in early May, Jan Slomp and Kathleen Charpentier were invited to attend meetings in Richmond, Vancouver Island, and the Gulf Islands. Their aim was to make lasting connections with local farmers, and to discuss the NFU and its work.

Islanders are concerned about food security. Only five percent of all food eaten by the residents of Vancouver Island and the Gulf Island is produced locally. The other ninety-five percent is food shipped by ferry or plane. Islanders are only three days away from food shortages at any given time. Geography has determined that opportunities for large-scale agriculture are very limited. Despite these realities, the government of BC has not been very interested in implementing policy to develop local food systems, or to promote and support small farms.

On Salt Spring Island, Slomp and Charpentier toured the farm of John Wilcox. Over the past 15 years he has turned land that used to be a small feed lot, into a thriving oasis of fruits, vegetables, and natural growth. Also, he has successfully revived a stream that was effectively “dead” when he acquired the land. Such commitment to environmental sustainability is typical of island farmers.

For their part, Vancouverites are becoming more and more interested developing local food systems. Urban gardens are becoming more popular as local food sources, and are even being eyed for their role in rehabilitation.

“It is just astounding the things they are doing in Vancouver. These people are making a real and lasting commitment to Food Sovereignty within their urban spaces. These gardens are appearing where nothing but paved parking lots and crime, were once situated. Former addicts are finding a new life in those gardens. It is truly inspiring,” stated Jan Slomp.

Indeed, in the Greater Vancouver area, inner city gardens are popping up everywhere. The gardens are being used to draw people from the street to

come and participate. One of the more prominent gardens, SOLEfood, is located in the heart of Vancouver, at the corner of East Hastings and Hawks Avenue, on a former parking lot that was a focal point for the drug trade. Last year this garden produced 12,000 pounds of vegetables. One of the more innovative creations is a vertical plastic column with round holes, in which strawberries are grown. Harvesting the strawberries from the column is like picking fruit from a tree. The City of Vancouver has committed to creating 100 such gardens over the next two years.

A few years ago student activists at the University of British Columbia successfully protested the proposed development of a section of campus land valued at \$22 million. The students have since turned the land into the vast 24 hectare UBC Farm. The farm is intended to be a place where anyone can go “to learn, live, and value the connection between land, food and community.”

Agricultural Land Reserves (ALR) are also being created in the greater Vancouver area. ALRs are designed to secure agricultural land from development, and are used for community gardens run by students and volunteers. Much of the produce is donated to the local food banks. The policy to commit land in BC for ALRs began in 1973, and today a total of 47,000 square kilometres is devoted to ALRs.

During the meetings attended by Slomp and Charpentier, local farmers expressed their admiration of the NFU’s commitment to Food Sovereignty, and their admiration of the NFU’s work. They admire the NFU’s national character and inclusiveness (the decision to accept urban farmers as full members was appreciated), and see great value in the NFU’s ability to give a national voice to their concerns.

“This is the first time I have seen people in Canada so focussed and committed to Food Sovereignty. I have seen it abroad, but never have I seen such a passion for it in Canada,” stated NFU Executive member Kathleen Charpentier.

The great news for the NFU is that it now has new members in the region, and organizing is under way. The key will be to continue to support and harness the energy and enthusiasm of these innovative farmers from BC.

—nfu—



Energy Development versus Farmland

—by Ann Slater

The discussion of energy versus food is not new to the National Farmers Union and was discussed once again at the Region 3 Convention on March 5. At the beginning of his presentation on Farmers' Rights in Dealing with Pipelines and Industrial Wind and Solar Projects, lawyer John Goudy said the topic was really about society's thirst for energy, versus its hunger for food. Farmland is and will continue to be the place where energy development takes place in populated areas like southern Ontario – for energy hungry cities, farmland is just the space between urban centers.

As Goudy noted, energy development does not have to take land out of production. However, there will always be a question regarding whether or not farmers are going to be able to use the land productively, at the end of the day. Energy development can be done in a way that does not destroy farmland. To protect farmland, however, landowners need to act in the best interest of the land, and governments need to put in place regulations to protect farmland and farmers in the future.

In a short review of the last hundred years of energy projects in Ontario, Goudy highlighted oil and gas production in places like Lambton county, public utility projects like gas lines, and the present renewable energy wind and solar projects. Oil and gas production was developed through unregulated private contracts, which often left landowners to deal with any problems created or caused by the developer. The only dispute mechanism available to landowners under private contracts, is the expensive route of the court system.

Public utility projects, like pipelines that came a little later, are governed by government regulations. This does give landowners some place to go if there are problems. However, because these are public projects, proponents have the power to expropriate and it can be difficult for landowners to negotiate contracts. Goudy noted that the thirty meters on either side of regulated pipelines, are regulated. This area is called a 'safety zone' and there are restrictions on what farmers can do with the land within it. The 'safety zone' is

designed to protect the energy companies, not the farms.

In the case of renewable energy projects, like solar and wind farms, we are back to unregulated private contracts. At present there is no expropriation power, so the projects can only happen with the consent of landowners. This gives landowners some power, but also leaves them with the responsibility to protect the land. According to Goudy, there are a lot of poorly written contracts. Restrictions found in contracts with renewable energy developers include ones that limit the physical structures that can be constructed on the farm, if the developers feel such structures may cause interference with their project. These restrictions also give the energy developer the right to veto any other use of the farm, or even the sale of the farm. The terms of the contract run with the land, and therefore will limit options for future land owners. Goudy explained that once a lease is signed, the tenant (the energy developer) may actually be saying to the landowner, 'I pay you rent but I also have a say in what you can do on the rest of your farm.'

All energy projects will be taken out of service at some point. In the case of renewable energy projects, the contracts are for twenty years. With a history of energy development in Ontario, and across Canada, we know the legacies of these developments – decommissioning (who and how), containment, project abandonment, contamination, and the disappearing energy developers. There could be clauses in the contracts requiring proper decommissioning, but at the moment there are no such regulations governing private energy developers.

In conclusion, Goudy noted the need for better regulation on the part of government, and for farmers or landowners to take seriously their responsibility to act as 'Stewards of the Land'.

—nfu—

John Goudy is an environmental lawyer at Cohen Highly LLP where he focuses on agriculture issues and the regulation of agricultural land use. An NFU member, he lives and works on his family's cash crop farm north of London, Ontario. His Law of the Lands – Farm, Energy and EnviroLaw blog can be found at www.landownerlaw.blogspot.com.



Japan's farmers contend with Triple Disaster

—by Cathy Holtslander

Our hearts go out to the people of Japan as they cope with the multiple disasters of the March 3, 2011 earthquake, tsunami and nuclear catastrophe. The earthquake and tsunami destroyed infrastructure, and oil- and chemical-contaminated seawater inundated the land. It will take a long time and a lot of work to recover and rebuild. But we are especially concerned for the tens of thousands of people who are also faced with radioactive contamination of their homes and territory. The farmers of Fukushima are suffering a loss that is hard for us to even comprehend: the land that has sustained them for generations is now contaminated with radioactive fallout that will remain dangerous well beyond their own lifespan.

Japan Family Farmers Movement (NOUMINREN), our Via Campesina sister organization, had warned of the elevated risks of nuclear accidents due to the culture of complicity that the nuclear company, TEPCO, had fostered. They noted how workers who pointed out safety problems were suppressed and silenced. Now, NOUMINREN is organizing to demand compensation, asking the company to admit that the nuclear melt-down is a human-made disaster and take responsibility for it.

Thousands of cows, pigs and chickens had to be left behind when 12-mile evacuation zone was declared. Without feed and water many have died. On March 21 the government banned the sale of vegetables and milk from Fukushima, Ibaraki, Tochigi and Gunma prefectures. Farmers were advised not to till the soil or plant rice because cultivation will incorporate radioactive fallout and make the problem worse. They are told to wait, and after the reactor has been stabilized they will have to remove a thick layer of soil to try to remove the radioactivity.

"We are so furious that there are actually farmers who will not be able to go back to their land in their lifetime due to the high radioactive contamination of their lands. We, therefore, are preparing other farms for them in different

prefectures." NOUMINREN headquarters reported on March 31. "At this point while the radiation continues leaking from the power plants, the future of agriculture in Fukushima and the surrounding prefectures is still vague. Only thing that is clear now is that we just have to continue acting."

While fighting for compensation, NOUMINREN members are also helping the people in the stricken areas by bringing in fresh food for the people and some feed for livestock. A member who led a protest against the construction of a radioactive waste repository in his town on Hokkaido has offered Fukushima 20 tons of grass. A dairy farmer in Fukushima city who must dump 300 litres of milk every day, says "This relief is great. Even though we have grass here, we cannot feed the cows."

The farmers are also trying to reduce the financial impact of the disaster by measuring actual radiation levels on food so consumers can regain the confidence to purchase safe products. NOUMINREN has borrowed some radiation monitoring equipment, but the job will need to be done at a larger scale with more sophisticated equipment in the long run.

NOUMINREN is asking the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery to support the affected farmers; compensate the farmers affected by the radioactive accident; ensure the distribution and safety of rice and food; reconsider the reduction of rice acreage policy, and revive farmlands to urgently increase production (as over 20,000 acres of farmland was damaged by seawater alone); and counter the shortage of rice by distributing the rice reserves.

On April 26, 2011, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, NOUMINREN members and supporting consumers went to Tokyo to demand compensation from Tokyo Electric Power Company and Ministry of Agriculture for the radioactivity-contaminated vegetables that the farmers could not sell.

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Midterm Conference of La Via Campesina

Brief report by: Kalissa Regier and Colleen Ross

While the NFU endeavours to restore local sustainable food systems here in Canada, maintain our family farms as the model for food production and advocate for agriculture and food policy that advances Food Sovereignty, decisions are made at an international level that actually undermines all of the work that we do at home. Therefore, our commitment to work with our allies in La Via Campesina never waivers and has in fact become increasingly important.

Review of the Midterm Conference of La Via Campesina

The Midterm Conference of La Via Campesina was held on the island of Berder in Brittany, France, from March 17-21, 2011. Colleen Ross, Vice President for policy, and Kalissa Regier, past Youth President, attended on behalf of the NFU. At the mid-term conference every four years, representatives and staff gather from all 9 regions of La Via Campesina. Together, they review the progress of the international movement and identify the strengths and weaknesses of the action plan that was developed at the previous International Conference, and plan for the larger International Conference. The last International Conference was held in Mozambique in October 2008.

Setting the International Stage

The first part of the mid-term meeting was focused on understanding the current international situation, and the social and political role that La Via Campesina plays at the United Nations, World Social Forums and other international venues where decisions are made that impact farmers, land, water etc. We were joined by a number of experts who prompted deep discussion and debate among the delegates of the conference.

Mouhieddine Cherbib, founding member of the Committee for the Respect of Freedoms and Human Rights in Tunisia (CRLDHT) and former President of the Tunisian Federation for Citizenship on Both Sides (FTCR), is originally from Tunisia, but has lived in France for the last 35 years. Cherbib spoke to us about the situation in the Middle East, and how a movement of unemployed university graduates advanced the recent uprising in Tunisia. Cherbib was able to share his vast insight into the

past 23 years of dictatorship in Tunisia, which ultimately led to a people's revolution that has been taking place since December 2010.

Gustave Massiah, French economist and political analyst, is one of the central figures of the global justice movement. Massiah offered us a clear historical analysis of the global political system and the world economy. He explained the logic and build-up of Neoliberalism, and the resulting multiple global crises. As a founder of the World Social Forum, Massiah stressed the importance of social movements working together in alliance.

We also had a presentation from Tomas Sommer-Houdeville from Focus on the Global South, who spoke about the revolving door between government militarization and transnational companies. Bob Brac from Biodiversity: Exchange and Diffusion of Experiences gave a sobering presentation about nanotechnology, geo-engineering, and synthetic biology, and how the current obsession with new technologies is exhausting our biodiversity.

Colleen Ross, along with African friends, gave updates on the proliferation of genetically modified organisms and land grabbing. Land grabbing has disturbing ramifications, in particular for smaller and more politically unstable countries, where food insecurity is already an issue. It was agreed that transnational corporations such as Monsanto and Syngenta must be held increasingly accountable for genetic contamination, crop loss due to the introduction of their products that have destroyed local food systems, profit gouging, and intellectual property applications where farmer's rights are ignored. The struggle between those corporations and governments that support all things GMO was referred to as the "greatest swindle in history, the Great Seed Swindle."

(continued on page 18...)



The Action Plan for 2011-2013

After establishing the current situation, we began to work on a plan for La Via Campesina for the next two years, until the Sixth Conference in Indonesia. We immediately broke into working groups of 10-15 people each.

Working Groups:

- 1) The struggle against transnational corporations (TNC's) including GMO's, green capitalism, climate change, repression and criminalisation, land and territory.
- 2) Food Sovereignty including the current food crisis, seeds, declaration on peasant rights, seminar on public policies and trade issues.
- 3) The participation of La Via Campesina in global events such as the World Social Forum, Rio+20 and COP 17 Durban, the UN FAO Committee on World Food Security and other UN events.
- 4) Finances and fundraising.

Increasingly, La Via Campesina is considered the legitimate voice on issues. Members have developed expertise in areas pertaining to agriculture as it relates to climate change, trade, green capitalism, biodiversity, the use of genetic resources, and other complex issues. We agreed that we must continue to have a presence at the forums and events where major decisions are being made, having our own clear positions and continuing to propose the alternative solutions embedded in food sovereignty. We will remain in these processes as long as we feel we need to be there.

Analysis of Internal Functioning

During the last day of the conference, we formed working groups based on language, to discuss, analyse, and evaluate the internal functioning of La Via Campesina. Key issues of this discussion included strengthening the regions, improving communication, broadening and strengthening the participation of the leadership, structural changes proposed to the committees, and proposals for the upcoming Sixth International Conference in Indonesia in 2013.



Photo: Colleen Ross speaks on a panel at the midterm conference of La Via Campesina with colleagues from African region and Spain.

The resounding message from participants at the mid-term meeting was that we are experiencing a “crisis of civilization”, where the human species and the planet are at risk. Farmers are encouraged to increase productivity, but this cannot be done without the increased use of resources that are already being exhausted. We must re-think the notion of science, technology, and modernity- the traditionally accepted notion of development and progress, must be and is being questioned. As the movement for social change grows, we realize that intellectual is not just academic. Rather, farmer, indigenous, and traditional knowledge must play a pivotal role, if we are to heal our planet and feed our burgeoning populations. Our collective agreement and vision to move forward in our struggle to achieve food sovereignty must be done between organizations and nations, partnering with like- minded allies.

Member organizations will continue to demand the end to political agendas and policies that actually increase social and economic inequities, destroy internal markets in favor of export markets, and create systems that marginalize farmers and workers. These systems further destabilize our economy, our environment, and our lives. We are re-affirmed in our commitment to the policy of the NFU that supports the realization of food sovereignty and social justice, and will continue to work with Via Campesina into the future.

Globalize struggle. Globalize hope.

—nfu—



The Beingessner Award for Excellence in Writing

The NFU would like to congratulate Nikaela Lange (12 years old) of Dalmeny, Saskatchewan and Jessica Lohmann (13 years old) of Bluffton, Alberta, who are runner-ups of the inaugural Paul Beingessner Award. The Beingessner Award is given to the author (age 21 years or under) of the best 500-1000 word essay on agriculture and food issues in Canada. This year's theme was The Importance of Family Farms in Canada. The Beingessner Award is named after Paul Beingessner of Truax, Saskatchewan, who passed away in the spring of 2009 in a tragic farm accident. Described as the "god-father of modern shortline railways" by former NFU President Stewart Wells, Paul was instrumental in the founding of Saskatchewan's first shortline railway, Southern Rails Co-operative. Beingessner also worked with the Ministry of Highways Short Line Advisory Unit supporting the efforts of other farmers to start shortline railways, served as a Saskatchewan Wheat Pool Delegate, and was an ardent supporter of the Canadian Wheat Board. In his later years, Beingessner was perhaps best known for his weekly column on farming and transportation issues with a social justice focus featured in papers across Western Canada.

Below are Nikaela Lange and Jessica Lohmann's essays:

Importance of Family Farms in Canada — by Nikaela Lange

I'd like to start this essay by saying I am not a farmer. I am an eater. Or, in more business-like terms, I am a consumer. Secondly, I would like to say that I am a kid, but even as a kid, I know that family farms are important in Canada. Even though I am not a farmer, I live in a farming community. Throughout the day you can see TONS of stuff that comes from family farms, starting from when you wake up and ending when you go to sleep.

Morning - A very commonly used wake-up call for farmers on TV and movies is the "cock-a-doodle-doo..." of a rooster. But researching this, I know that it's not just used in TV and movies. It actually happens. Not to every farmer, but still, it exists in reality. So once the rooster goes off and the farmer jumps out of bed, it's time to feed the animals and get milk and eggs. Who needs morning yoga when you are already bending every-which-way to get the chicken eggs? I personally don't eat eggs, but my teacher at the school I went to gets her eggs specially from a local family farm because she insists they just taste better! I've also only had milk produced in a factory farm, so I don't know which tastes better, but I have had fruits and vegetables grown from home and not in a factory, and I know that the home grown ones taste better. So after all the kids eat and everyone is dressed for the day, it's time for school. All the farm kids I know take the morning bus to school, because their parents are busy farming and it's too far to walk. Taking the bus is a great experience for kids to learn to be punctual, because the bus I go on will not wait.

School- Time - You may think family farming does not affect kids at school, but ponder that awhile longer. They had a healthy breakfast, made

with food (hopefully) from their farm, which, by the way, has a higher nutrition level. And that healthy breakfast, assuming it's produced on the farm, is produced without the use of harmful chemicals. And it's proven that kids minds work better when they had a healthy breakfast.

Afternoon - After all the kids are home from school, they do their chores. After their chores are done, they do their homework. Then after all that is done, they hopefully have dinner with their family. A family that farms together, stays together.

This essay was pointed mainly at why family farming is important to kids, but family farming is important to everybody. I look at our small community and even I can see what a difference the farmers make. Kids and adults alike get jobs from some of the local farmers. Those workers and the farmers themselves take that earned money and support the small businesses in our community. Because farmers have to live where they work, they try to use less chemicals and use better farming practices, which means better for the environment. Family farms don't treat farm animals like "tools". Animals raised on a family farm are a part of that farm and a part of the family raising them. They are allowed to exist like animals were meant to. I like driving down our road and seeing the cows, horses and sheep out munching away on the grass, doing exactly what they were meant to do.

Family farms can help everyone, and everyone can help the family farms. Family farms care. So next time you need meat, eggs, fruits or vegetables, see if you can buy some from a local farm in your community.

—nfu—



Importance of Family Farms in Canada — by Jessica Lohmann

I think family farms are important because they bring families closer together and create a loving and caring environment perfect to grow up in. The animals raised on family farms live a better life than ones that grow up on a factory farm. Our animals we raise are healthier and benefit the community around us. Also heritage breeds are kept at rural farms such as wild turkeys and other rare breeds of livestock that would become extinct if family farms became extinct also.

Family farms bring families close together because, like the motto, a family that works together stays together. When dad needs help with the cows we can all go out there and contribute. I remember when I was smaller I used to ride the bales when we gave the steers and heifers bedding. I always had a blast and that just shows how much fun we have out here on the farm. We have lots of space to play and run around in because we live in a rural community. Also when I grow older I can help out with haying and silaging. I learn valuable lessons when I work on the farm like how to drive a tractor and plow the field. My sister and I both own some cattle so we learn responsibility and financial management that will benefit us in the future. Family farms create a great environment to learn and grow up in.

The animals we raise are healthier for many reasons such as they are grass fed while the ones that are fed at feedlots never get any grass. Our animals have lots of range to feed on, while feedlots have many cattle but not much room. The cattle are more stressed in the feedlot where there are more people around and less room to move. Our cattle have fields to graze in and roam where there are not as many people moving around disrupting the animals around them. Cattle are meant to graze in open fields and not be crowded together in a dirty, muddy pen. I think that family farms are more humane when they raise cows thus making them a much better choice to use.

Family farms are becoming rarer in Canada because of larger Corporations taking over. The large corporations use more chemicals such as herbicides, pesticides and fertilizers while family farms try to use them sparingly. I think that the

fewer chemicals in my food and environment are better for my and everyone's health. Also the produce benefits the community by providing food for the locals. Usually when we butcher a steer or heifer someone will want a half or quarter. Also when we butcher our roosters someone may want a couple. We always have lots of meat, milk, eggs and vegetables, and don't have to worry about running out until spring and that is when we start our garden. Many small farms are better than a couple of large ones, because we create more jobs for the community and support businesses such as Agricultural dealers. Family Farms are better for the environment and small towns making them better than a factory farm.

Our farm is home to many different kinds and breeds of animals, such as chickens and cattle. We have many different breeds of chickens plus a couple of turkeys and pheasants. We also have some heritage breeds such as bantam chickens, Americana, buff orpington, brahmas, silkies and various other breeds. Our farm helps keep these breeds going, because we keep many of the birds or sell and give them away to people in our area. Also we let our chickens set (sit on eggs) if they want, so they can raise chicks themselves providing healthier chickens that will be more likely to set the next year. They are healthier because they get to eat bugs and whatever they may find on the ground at an early age, where chicks hatched otherwise live on commercial chickenfeed until they are about a month old. Also, I have a pair of Merriam turkeys that are providing eggs to hatch. The turkey chicks, after fully grown, can be eaten or sold to provide a small profit for our farm. We also have some breeds of cattle such as Angus, Simmental and Charolais. These examples show why it a great thing to live on a family farm.

These are just a few of the reasons why family farms are important. They provide a good environment to grow. The animals are raised healthier and happier than ones in a factory farm. Heritage breeds are grown and raised on rural family farm, which create a diversity of breeds that are more resistant to sickness. Family farms benefit the community by creating jobs and supporting the small towns that they surround.

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A milestone on the road to food sovereignty in Canada

—by Cathy Holtslander

Resetting the Table: A People's Food Policy for Canada was officially launched on April 18, 2011. The announcement was a milestone on the road to food sovereignty in Canada. In 2007 the Via Campesina organized the Nyeleni global forum on food sovereignty in Mali. The over 500 representatives from 80 countries produced a consensus statement that defined the “six pillars” of food sovereignty, which has become an important tool for building the food movement around the world. Soon after, some of the people from Canada who went to Mali began organizing to engage Canadians on food policy using the food sovereignty framework. In 2008, the People's Food Policy Project was born.

Resetting the Table provides an integrated and comprehensive approach to food and agriculture policy that is firmly rooted in the experience of the people who provide food and eat food in all parts of the country – including fishers, farmers, providers of traditional indigenous foods, as well as those who struggle with poverty and hunger in our biggest cities and in remote rural communities, those who are linking food and health issues, environmentalists, and people who focus on Canada's relations with other countries through trade and foreign aid. The beauty and strength of the policy is that it has created and articulated a genuine community of common interest and a statement of shared values and goals for food in Canada. *Resetting the Table* can now serve as a guide for advocacy no matter where a person or group is situated within Canada's food movement.

While a common interest in food issues brought people together, this project also created the space for people with a great diversity of backgrounds to discuss – and sometimes struggle with – their differences in perspectives and approaches to food sovereignty. The conversation among Indigenous and non-Indigenous members of the project was particularly fruitful in

bringing about new insights (including our seventh pillar of food sovereignty: Food is Sacred) and bonds of solidarity.

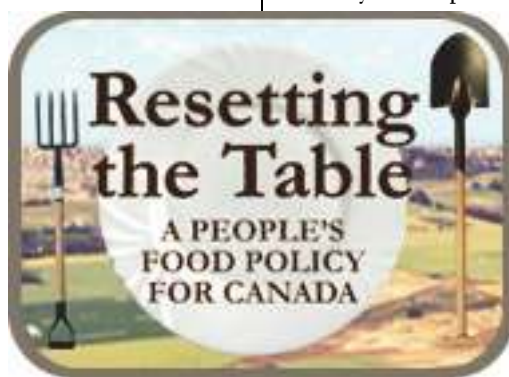
Reading the policy document, one notices strands that are shared by most, if not all, planks of the platform: shifting away from an export-oriented approach and instead decentralizing and re-localizing food – especially its processing and distribution; changing regulations so that there is more space and support for smaller, human-scaled production (particularly in meat inspection and processing) while ensuring that the large-scale industries are properly controlled; promoting care of the land and the ecosystem upon which we depend for wholesome

food and clean water; and promoting education and skill training in support of food sovereignty; helping young and new farmers get started and ensuring they will be able to earn a living as farmers.

Perhaps the most compelling part of this ground-breaking policy is its explicit focus on food governance: how we can democratically and effectively make food policy decisions for ourselves at all levels of jurisdiction. *Resetting the Table* recommends creating inclusive food policy councils that would ensure that food is considered, and made a priority, no matter what the focus of the policy is, and that interdependence, sustainability, health and justice are valued over the promotion of profit and individualism. Food policy councils would ensure various policies concerning food and affecting food and agriculture were integrated, and that the kind of knowledge and research needed to develop good policy is supported and learned by those responsible for implementing policies.

NFU members have been involved in the People's Food Policy Project since its inception, taking various roles, including helping with management of the project, organizing and

(continued on page 22...)



(Food Sovereignty in Canada, from page 21)

participating in kitchen table meetings, contributing food stories, joining discussion groups, writing and providing feedback on documents. *Resetting the Table* is both a major accomplishment and an important starting point for the next leg of the journey towards a more just food system.

You can get *Resetting the Table: A People's Food Policy for Canada* from www.peoplesfoodpolicy.ca. Look for the icon on the right-hand sidebar and click to open the PDF document. The website also includes links to each of the ten detailed policy discussion papers that were developed through the participatory grassroots process.

—nfu—

Seven Pillars of Canadian Food Sovereignty

1. **Focuses on Food for People**
2. **Values Food Providers**
3. **Localizes Food Systems**
4. **Puts Control Locally**
5. **Builds Knowledge and Skills**
6. **Works with Nature**
7. **Recognizes that Food is Sacred**

(Japan's farmers contend with Triple Disaster, from page 16)

Fukushima is the world's most recent nuclear accident, and it may well prove to be the most dangerous. Radiation releases from the damaged reactors and the spent fuel continue to flow into the air and ocean at alarming levels. Accidents and close calls have accompanied weapons development and power expansion from the nuclear industry's earliest days. "Background radiation" is mostly from these accidents as well as from atmospheric weapons testing and routine releases from operating nuclear power plants.

With Canada's nuclear power plants next to some of our best farmland, and proposals for

transporting spent nuclear fuel across the prairies for storage in our North, we can't help but reflect on the experience of Japan and consider the implications of a nuclear accident here.

—nfu—

To help Japanese farmers, you can send a donation to NOUMINREN by wire transfer:

Bank: Mizuho Bank Ltd.
Branch: Ikebukuro Nishiguchi Branch
Address: 1-15-2 Nishi Ikebukuro,
 Toshima-Ku, Tokyo
Account No: 229 1775644
Swiftcode: MHBKJPJT

Email Updates: Would you like to keep informed about NFU activities by email? We send out copies of press releases, articles, briefs and other relevant material to the members whose email addresses we have. If you would like to be included on that list **please send your current email address to nfu@nfu.ca**. Put "Member Email" in the subject heading and include your name and Region, District and Local in the body of the message.

Farm Photos Wanted! The Website Committee is working on a complete redesign and renewal of the NFU website. We are very excited about creating a new look and a much easier-to-use site. We want to include links to members' own farm websites as well as photos of members and your farms as a way to show the diversity of family farms in the NFU. We also want to include pictures of the challenges and rewards of farming in different parts of Canada, especially images that illustrate the positive and negative impacts of various policies at the farm level.

So we are giving you an assignment. Go through your photo collection and pick out a few of your favorite farm photos and/or NFU event photos. Make sure any people in the photos give permission to use their image on our website. **Send the photos by email (no prints please, just digital photos)** and include where, when and by whom the photos were taken as well as a short description. If your existing photo collection is sparse, bring the camera with you a couple of times over the upcoming season and take some pictures to send us – or ask a friend or family member to be your farm's photojournalist this year. We are looking forward to having a collection of NFU photos to use on the website. **Send your photos and/or farm website URLs to holtslander@nfu.ca** and put "Website photos" in the subject heading.



(Region 1 Report, from page 8)

Budget Consultations

In mid-February, the NFU met with PEI Minister of Finance Wes Sheridan and Deputy Minister Doug Clow, to discuss the upcoming budget. We discussed farm debt, special economic hardship cash advance to hog and cattle producers, and our work on the fair trade project.

Minister Sheridan sought our opinion on discussions he had been having with an Ontario land leasing company interested in purchasing blocks of farm land from retiring farmers. He also updated us on the Provincial Nominee Program, and the changes made which would make it available to farmers. Under this program the Province agrees to nominate new immigrants for Canadian permanent resident status with Immigration Canada, in return for minimum equity investments in Island businesses of \$150,000. The program requires nominees to actively manage and own at least 33% of any Island business, including farm businesses, to be eligible.

Caucus Meetings

Since the last report, the NFU on PEI have met with both the provincial government and

opposition caucuses, to discuss a number of important farm issues. The Provincial election is on October 3rd of this year, and the campaigning has pretty much begun. It's going to be a long summer.

NFU Presidential Road Assistance

On the way home from the CETA meeting with Premier Ghiz, Terry Boehm and I stopped for a young women whose car went off the road, and visited with her until her partner showed up. She was pretty worked up, but unhurt. When she hopped into the back seat of my Toyota Corolla, and smelled the cars interior she declared "You really are farmers! Why aren't you driving a truck?"

It's a Girl

Thirty five hours after meeting with the NFU, Premier Ghiz and his wife Dr. Kate Ellis have a new baby daughter. Emma Christina Ghiz was born on April 8th at 6:18 AM, and weighed 7 lbs 12 ounces. This is their second daughter. Congratulations from the National Farmers Union!

—nfu—

(Region 7 Report, from page 13)

To expect that the misery of market power abuse endured by beef farmers over the course of the last decade, now miraculously transforms into prices that look somewhat better at the moment, is fantasy. The concentration in processing and retailing prevented, for several years, any real value arriving at the farm gate. That concentration of power has not waned; it just could no longer pretend that there was an oversupply, depressing farm gate prices. And it is obvious that governments are committed to keep that concentrated power intact.

Bill 10, Amendments to Bill 36

The Alberta government increasingly came under fire for their dictatorial pieces of legislation that were passed, namely Bills 46, 19, 50, and 36. They have, in response, crafted Bill 10 that deals with amendments to the Land Assembly Act, and

Bill 35. Bill 10 is, however, merely an image message. The minister still has the power to seize property without compensation. Moreover, citizens are still not allowed to seek a ruling through the courts in the event of a disagreement with proceedings. Bill 10 was presented for discussion by cabinet ministers at different locations across the province, to create an aura of public consultations. The meetings were held on short notice and on invitation only. That kind of arrangement truly reflects the government's commitment to due democratic process in Alberta.

Region 7 Convention

Regional Convention is planned for June 18, 2011 in Hoadly Hall. We hope to end our full meeting agenda with a social gathering around a pig roasted by Richard Griebel, outside the hall at 6:00PM. Look for further details to come. —nfu—



The Paul Beingessner Award for Excellence in Writing

Working with the Family of Paul Beingessner, the National Farmers Union has established an annual literary prize in honour of Paul and his contribution to rural and agricultural journalism. Paul Beingessner was a farmer, an activist, and a writer who defended Canada's family farms until his tragic death in a farm accident in the spring of 2009. His widely-read and respected weekly columns brought a fresh and progressive perspective to rural and farm issues.

Young writers are encouraged to submit their work to the Paul Beingessner Award for Excellence in Writing.

Award Criteria and Details:

- There will be two age categories – 15 years and under, and 16 years to 21 years. An award in the amount of \$500 will be awarded to one essay in each age category for a non-fiction letter or essay 500-1000 words in length.
- The theme for 2011 will be *The Future of Canada's Farmland*.
- Deadline for entries is September 30, 2011.
- The prizes of \$500.00 will be awarded at the NFU Convention in November 2011.
- All or some entries may be published by the National Farmers Union.
- Send entries to the National Farmers Union:

By email: nfu@nfu.ca

Or by mail to: National Farmers Union, 2717 Wentz Ave., Saskatoon, SK, S7K 4B6

(We will confirm that we received your email submission within a week. If you do not get a confirmation email, please resend your entry or phone the office at (306) 652-9465)



NFU 42nd National Convention

NOVEMBER 24TH TO 26TH, 2011



Four Points by Sheraton, London, Ontario

For the Love of the Land

Room Rate: \$110 for Standard Double; \$125 Executive King Suites

To receive this rate, RESERVE BY NOVEMBER 1, 2011 and mention you are with the NATIONAL FARMERS UNION.

For reservations:

CALL: 519-681-0600 OR EMAIL: laurabroer@fourpointslondon.com

OR

A personalized website for the NFU Convention has also been created. You can book, modify or cancel a reservation. Type the following link into your web browser:

<http://www.starwoodmeeting.com/StarGroupsWeb/res?id=1103246854&key=699D6>