

THE union farmer

QUARTERLY

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Photo: At the NFU Convention banquet, Annette Desmarais (left), Marie Burge (middle) and Marie Hendricken (right) catch up on the important happenings in their lives

(photo by Carla Roppel)

Message from the Editor...



Carla Roppel

After an eight-year foray into corporate communications, I am honoured to have the opportunity to come back to where my heart and passion lives. I began as Executive Director in the two-month run up to the annual convention – perfect timing to learn

both from convention sessions and from members.

And what I have learned! The organization has changed. Stable funding in Ontario has increased membership there. A cadre of young, bright farmers is ready to take their places in the world and in the NFU. There are new faces among the elected officials, but many that I recognized from former days.

The nature of the challenges that farmers face are much the same as they were eight years ago, but are a thousand-fold more intense. Canada's political powers have never been particularly farmer-friendly, but they at least pretended to consult with us. Now, there isn't even a pretense; farmers like our members simply do not matter to them.

What does matter is capital. In its pursuit, the Harper government is cutting secret trade deals, turning over to foreign interests our sovereign right to self-determination. Any government that Canadians elect will be stripped both of its duty to attend to the needs of its citizens and its right to do so for a generation or more. If they try, and if future earnings of investors are threatened, Canadians will have to provide compensation for all future financial losses. Citizens or corporations? Democracy or ... what?

The institutions and protections that most farmers valued are gone or changing, not for the better: the CWB, the Canadian Grain Commission, publicly funded research capacity, food inspection. Canadian democratic processes are under attack. This is neither the Canada I know, nor the Canada I want.

Just before Convention was called to order, Karen Pedersen and Cory Ollicka facilitated a workshop on NFU convention processes. A statement made in that workshop stuck in my mind: the strength of democracy is that, while it represents the views of the majority, it hears and can be influenced by the views of the minority. At two per cent of the population, farmers are the minority. But in terms of those Canadians who are primary producers, farmers are the majority. Should farmers not have the majority opinion in making decisions that affect them?

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2717 Wentz Avenue, Saskatoon, SK S7K 4B6

Telephone: 306-652-9465 — Fax: 306-664-6226 — E-mail: nfu@nfu.ca — Website: www.nfu.ca

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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...



National President

—by Terry Boehm

I would like to open by thanking all the staff who helped to make our National Convention the success that it was.

The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement with Europe will soon be upon us, and the federal government has concluded an Investor Protection agreement with China. The Chinese agreement is for a minimum of 15 years, whereupon with one year's notice, the agreement can be ended by either party. However, the conditions of the agreement are to remain in force for another 15 years after its conclusion. Essentially, Harper and his government have locked us into a deal for 31 years. CETA has similar term conditions, calling for conditions to apply for 20 years after the agreement, which is open-ended, concludes.

What we have is a federal government locking us into agreements that hobble our ability to govern ourselves as we see fit for more than a generation. This will alter fundamentally what Canada is and who Canadians are. This is, of course, exactly what Harper promised to do in his speech to the Conservative Party days after his election with a majority government in 2011. His government is doing this by concluding secret trade agreements as fast as possible, and also by passing omnibus bills without allowing any amendments as fast as possible.

Whether we realize it or not, we are a very different country than we were two years ago because of these actions. With the Chinese agreement, we can only restrict their access to our natural resources if we restrict ourselves in the same way. CETA has a similar clause. What we need to be aware of however, is that if we choose to pass laws to protect the environment, or any

other form of legislation that would affect the profitability of a Chinese company investing here, Canada will have to compensate them financially for lost profits. We are on the hook for 31 years and it will be very expensive to govern ourselves. We as taxpayers will be transferring money *directly* to Chinese state-owned corporations – and shortly, to European corporations – if we dare to alter things as they exist now. We can, of course, do anything that increases their profitability and their investment returns, but will be unable to reverse course if we see negative consequences.

We are being colonized for our resources. If we do not like it, we get to pay to change it. This means that we will not be able to afford to govern ourselves in the public interest. We will have to allow free corporate reign, and that is exactly what Harper's vision is.

I want to quote from the leaked CETA texts regarding covered procurements - purchases of goods and services that any level of government undertakes, as well as public schools, universities, hospitals, research institutions, and crown corporations etc. *“With respect to any measure regarding covered procurement, each Party, including its procuring entities, shall accord immediately and unconditionally to the goods and services of the other Party and to suppliers of the other Party offering such goods and services, treatment no less favourable..... a) within Canada, treatment no less favourable than that accorded by a province or territory,.... To goods and services of, and suppliers located in, that province or territory;”*

(continued on page 23...)



A message from the...



Women's President

— by Joan Brady

Raising Resilience

Once again, I come away from our recent NFU convention with many new thoughts and increased understanding of the intricacies of the issues that affect the state of our nation. In particular, Andrew Nikiforuk's keynote at the public event resonated as he spoke about his latest book "The Energy of Slaves". Nikiforuk outlined how a reliance on energy in every aspect of our lives has enslaved us and caused us to lose important characteristics and values needed to survive in an increasingly volatile world. Nikiforuk was quite clear that in his estimation, the world would be facing significant crisis within 5-10 years as a result of diminished energy supplies and the toll on the environment from current extraction practices.

My first reaction, in the face of this prediction, was to think about resilience: the ability to recover from unforeseen setbacks and short-term crises. I often say that the most difficult gift I have given my children is resilience. It means that we have survived some difficult situations and built the skill set to handle the unknowns that will challenge us in the future. Together, as a family we have faced what has come our way and have broken challenges into manageable, but solvable, pieces. We have also looked at the future differently, being careful to allow for various options and directions, diversifying our commitments and opportunities, and generally focusing on what is important: family values, relationships and building our true assets to meet the future.

When I think about resilience from a national perspective, I wonder about Canada's ability to meet an energy crisis, or any crisis for that matter. Diversity and the ability to take charge of a problem and associated solutions are tools required to strengthen resilience. Selling out our energy resources to foreign investors, directing all our attention to global trade and

empowering global multinational corporations above the public trust will mean less resilience and an inability to retain the current standards that Canadians have come to expect and rely on. Do Canadians have the collective and individual skills, tools and values to meet future difficulties?

As I continue to contemplate resiliency as a necessary asset to a secure future, I reflect that farm families with ideologies much like my own, probably had more than the average in resilience reserves. Facing uncertainties in weather, markets and policy has equipped us to meet various challenges and not step away from issues that must be addressed. In fact, from a sheer survival perspective, we will have valuable skills to offer our fellow Canadians when crisis hits, and priorities return to basics of food, shelter and health.

Will farmers once again be valued for their primary importance in feeding a nation, and as caretakers of valuable land resources? Will we be rewarded for our loyalty and perseverance? Will we have been able to retain native species, biodiversity and the vast stores of knowledge in production methods and systems that do not fit today's popular paradigm? Will farm families be recognized as the best way to protect our food future?

As we approach the New Year, my wish for you and your family is a secure future, one that appreciates and rewards your expertise and ability to lead in the face of challenges. My wish for the NFU is similar: that we work together to build organizational resiliency, and that we continue to respond with integrity and stamina to the issues facing farm families today. I look forward to working with members, staff and the leadership of the NFU and will be glad to share with all of you, my personal aptitude and appreciation for resiliency.

Yours in Union, Joan Brady



A message from the...



Cammie Harbottle

Youth President

As I come back to my farm in the wake of another great NFU convention, I am filled with new and inspiring ideas. I also feel a deep concern for the state of agricultural politics in our country. While we are continually faced with the challenges posed by trade deals, GMOs, land grabbing, oil exploration, to name but a few, this convention gave me hope that there are alternative and democratic ways to move forward. Many thanks to the diverse panelists and speakers who were able to articulate the forms, functions and principles of cooperatives as they are expressed in various contexts around the world, and how they might be relevant to the family farm. Over the past few years, I have been giving thought to the possibilities of a co-op model for my farm, and this convention has given me much more food for thought.

As the NFU launches into another year, I want to first extend a thank you to Paul Slomp as he steps down from the Youth Vice President position and into Vice President of Operations. Over the past two years, Paul and I have worked together as co-youth presidents to represent NFU youth from across the country, to engage new young farmers and associate members, and strengthen the role of NFU youth within the organization. I have enjoyed working with Paul in this capacity very much, and am excited to see where he takes the organization in his new position!

Second, I want to welcome Alex Fletcher as our new incoming Youth Vice President. For those of you who weren't at convention, Alex farms in Metchosin, British Columbia at Wind Whipped Farm with his partner, Virginie Laval-Picard. Together, they operate a CSA and market garden serving Victoria and Southern Vancouver Island. I have had fun getting to know Alex through NFU youth work over the past few years and am looking

forward to working with him in the year to come. Alex - welcome!

This was an exciting convention for the youth, with over 20 young and engaged members from all across the country. There were both new and familiar faces, representing diverse sectors: livestock, grains, and vegetables. We're still on the hunt for some youthful dairy farmers! The youth caucus was, as usual, a little short on time, but we were able to start the discussion and set the gears in motion for this coming year's activities. The next generation of the NFU is growing stronger!

In March, the youth are planning to hold our annual youth meeting in Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia, where my farm happens to be located. This year's theme will build on last year's, and will focus on youth engagement. We hope to welcome Joan Brady back out to her home province to offer us leadership and facilitation for the meeting. We will spend two days working together as youth delegates from each region. On the third day we will host a public event to engage young farmers from the Maritime provinces and suck them up into the NFU!

Each year our ability to hold this event is contingent on the support of regions and other funding. This year again, I want to thank the National Farmers Foundation for continuing to support the work of the youth, in particular for providing funding to make this meeting a possibility. If you are interested in participating in this meeting, please be in touch with me (cammie@waldegrave.org) or Alex (alexchisholmfletcher@gmail.com). We'd love to hear from you, as it is not always easy to find the young farmers out there! (In this case, we are considering youth to be below 35 years of age.)

In Union, Cammie Harbottle



Supply Management: *Unscrambling the Eggs*

It's a bit of a mixed metaphor but this is how Randall Affleck, PEI dairy producer and long time member of the NFU, described the way he spends his days. Affleck was referring to the ongoing need to counter a view of supply management (SM) that is heavily influenced by corporate-backed media. The complexity of SM is easily misrepresented and misunderstood, and can be a source of friction among farmers and between producers and consumers. With his usual humor, Affleck shared his views about the value that SM provides to dairy producers and consumers.

Rampant in the countryside is the corporate-influenced narrative that globalization and free trade is good for everyone. But it isn't. Exports are up, and so is farm debt, but Realized Net Farm income is down - except in the dairy sector. In fact, SM – a system to manage domestic milk supply – is the most effective mechanism for farmers to recover their

production costs and earn a steady income, and at the same time, retain market control. According to the late Ellard Powers, no other arrangement has improved “... *the farmer's income more than has supply management.*”



Affleck acknowledges the downside of SM, and referring to the NFU's diverse membership, said “We have members who have been in (supply management) right from its beginning, but we also have young members who are bumping up against the institution, and the regulatory power of supply management.” But he maintains that SM is better than the alternative.

As evidence, he quoted headlines from around the world, such as: 14% fewer Norwegians dairy farms since 2005; New Zealand dairy producers receive the lowest prices in the world, but consumers pay a retail price equivalent to what Canadians pay; since de-regulation, Australian dairy production is down sharply, and there is a grocery trade deficit.

Affleck noted that “it's okay to have statutory protections for Monsanto and big pharma, but statutory protection for farmers is just not acceptable at all.” The remark followed his reference to a 2006 letter written to government by former Liberal MP and current CEO of the Canadian Council of Chief Executives, John Manley. In it, he outlines his wish list for Canada's future. This is a summary of those wishes: reform the marketing practices of the CWB (done); phase out supply management for dairy, eggs and poultry (under threat despite government assurances to the contrary); modernize the copyright act and enhance protection of intellectual property (some is done, some is underway).

Secret negotiations on CETA, now at the ministerial negotiation stage, and TPP continue. Affleck fears that to gain access to markets on the Pacific rim and in the EU, the federal government will give way on SM despite assurances to the contrary. If history is any indicator, his suspicion is fully justified.

—nfu—

Reasons for Supporting Supply Management

- It is rooted in farmer cooperation.
- It is entirely producer-controlled. Changes require the unanimous agreement of all provinces.
- Farmers have at least as much say as the big processors - an indication that farmers gain market power with SM. Contrast this with other ag sectors, where corporations have the last word.
- Discipline of actions among farmers allows them to pool their resources and amplify the outcome of their work (e.g. lobby efforts, transportation costs, advertising and promotion, marketing, etc.).
- It is a localized production system that provides a fair return to farmers; quality product to consumers, who pay a fair but full price; and quality jobs for local residents.
- It maintains a moderate farm size and both utilizes and protects marginal lands.



UPOV '91...Again

- Seeding Saving Under Attack

Terry Boehm spoke about the restrictions being placed on seed saving: how these tools transfer wealth from farmers to corporations, and how legal instruments are being used to take away farmer autonomy. He described the way that the ground is being prepared to adopt the UPOV '91 Plant Breeders Rights regime.

He outlined how biological controls, variety registration regulations and gene patenting prevent farmers from saving and re-using seed. Regulations and the courts, originally meant to protect the public interest, are now used to control farmers, for example by deregistering non-GMO varieties and instilling fear of litigation for inadvertent patent infringement.



Photo: Terry Boehm addresses attendees at the NFU National Convention on UPOV '91.

(photo by Naomi Friesen)

The government's focus on "innovation" must be understood as part of the push to adopt UPOV '91, which is being led by big seed corporations and supported by universities. Both are looking for the resulting increase in revenue from license fees – revenue that will come off the farmer's bottom line. Farmers' huge debt loads shows that "innovation" has not yet provided better income for farmers. Instead, the major benefactors are those who control the innovations.

The UPOV '78 regime currently in force is silent about seed saving, but UPOV '91 allows seed saving as "farmer's privilege". This turns an age-old practice into a right to be conferred. In practice, UPOV '91 makes this privilege impossible to realize because the PBR holder controls stocking (storing) and conditioning (cleaning) of seed.

UPOV '91 would transfer wealth from farmers to seed companies by allowing for "end-point" royalties – paying royalties to the seed company on every bushel of grain sold, and on every acre of hay cut. The regime also incorporates information hoarding and secrecy instead of open sharing.

Boehm outlined key recommendations for a seed system that serves the public interest and farmers.

He closed by saying, "Those who control the seed, control the food system. Those who control the food system control people. Do we want to entrust Monsanto and their like with this power?"

—nfu—

Weathering the Storm:

Leadership, Resilience and Democratic Control

How can co-ops ensure their continued success? Kyle Korneychuk, former Wheat Pool director; Harold Chapman, adult education and co-operatives expert; and Wendy Holm, currently studying co-operative management – offered their views on this subject.

Speaking about the Wheat Pool, Korneychuk said that in the final years of the Wheat Pool, the directors either did not have farmers' interests at heart, or did not have the courage to fight the necessary battles. "Farmer member/owners were bribed with their own money (their equity) because the true value of the co-op was never determined or understood,"



Kyle Korneychuk

he said. Instead, the directors allowed management to make critical decisions about value and privatization. Now, rather than farmers profiting from the assets created by the Pool, those benefits will accrue to foreign companies.

Korneychuk also noted his concern that local Co-op stores are losing their way as management decisions are made further from home. "Co-op members must become more active," he said. "Understand how important your co-op is for your community's economy. Put your name forward, and only elect people who know co-op principles and who put the co-op's interests ahead of their own. Scrutinize directors. Elect *directors*, not followers! If members remain apathetic, the co-op stores will follow in the Wheat Pool's footsteps."

Harold Chapman, who started organizing farm and machinery co-ops after WW2, quoted a Danish leader who said that without an education program, co-ops rarely last more than a generation and a half. The people who start a



Harold Chapman

co-op understand why they had to create it, but the next generation can easily take it for granted if they don't understand that history.

Chapman recommended that co-ops use good adult education practices like small group discussions and reportbacks to help people really invest in their own learning and strengthen their co-ops. He suggested that participants in training sessions should take away materials and ideas about how they can work in their communities to ensure that co-op principles continue to be understood and valued.

Wendy Holm presented a case study of Dairyland - a small BC-based milk marketing and processing co-op that grew into a large national organization. Rapid expansion by an aggressive CEO unchecked by an equally strong Board Chair, led to financial trouble and eventually to privatization (demutualization) to pay off debt.

Holms suggested that an analytical tool called *OCAID*, which plots "Operating Cash Flow After Interest & Distribution against Retained Earnings, would have helped the board understand their actual financial situation. By providing Dairyland directors this critical information, they may have retained control of the organization and perhaps ensured its continued success.



Wendy Holm

Holm's presentation is available on her website: www.wendyholm.com.

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Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) Court Cases:

- *The Rule of Law and Democracy*

Most, if not all of us are too familiar with the CWB fight and the legal cases currently in the courts. Two speakers updated us on the situation: Stewart Wells, Chair of the Friends of the CWB; and Arthur Shafer, philosophy professor at the University of Manitoba.

Wells began with a quote from a 1998 policy statement from the government of the day about the then-new CWB Act. They intended farmers to be “in the driver’s seat” when it comes to any future changes regarding the Wheat Board’s single desk. He described how our present government not only removed farmer control of the CWB, but also used the process of its destruction as a test case to see how far it could go before Canadians would push back against its anti-democratic actions.



Stewart Wells

Wells reviewed the litany of offences committed during the process, including calling off the RCMP who were asked to thoroughly investigate the apparent theft of confidential CWB voters’

lists. He recounted the successful court battle to reinstate the single desk for barley, resulting in over \$500M of benefit to farmers – which would not have happened without support from NFU members. He closed with an update on the two court cases that are under way.

Arthur Shafer spoke about the Harper government’s lawlessness and its disdain for evidence. Citing several examples, including the CWB’s economic success, he said the

government is saying “don’t confuse us with facts, our mind is made up.” Shafer stated that ideology that is so dogmatic that it is blind to evidence is a real danger to society, and that this is the kind of government we have.



Arthur Shafer

Shafer’s second point was the lawlessness of this government: it is not just that it doesn’t respect the law - it is *ignoring* it. Shafer pointed to Harper’s pardoning the farmers who tried to sell wheat in the USA without an export permit. These border runners accepted the benefit - but not the burden or responsibility - of a collective arrangement. The formal economic term for this is *free rider* or, in common language, *parasite*.

Shafer said these law-breakers may simply have been greedy, while some might have opposed a law they believed to be unjust. Conscientious objectors, however, break the law to draw attention to the law, and they show their respect for the law by going to prison. When Stephen Harper pardoned the border runners, it was because his government did not agree with the law in effect when the offense was committed, and thus, he applied the law selectively.

Shafer concluded that our federal government does not respect evidence, and that it claims to be a “law and order” government - except when it does not like the law. This choice of lawless behaviour is deeply worrying because it affects the integrity of our society. A society that does not respect the rule of law can easily degenerate into a society that forfeits democracy.

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Co-op Types: Forms, Functions and Principles

Michael Gertler, Fellow in Community and Co-operative Development at the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, said that co-ops are fundamentally different from other enterprises. They are about people and their communities rather than capital, and well-suited to meet the needs of rural communities. With economic timelines of decades rather than quarters, they provide stable, quality jobs and local investment; allow other economic and social activities; offer meaningful participation and a presence at the decision-making table; and produce social, economic and environmental multipliers.

Co-ops' different design, structures, priorities and operating practices make its capital less nimble, but it does prevent the concentration of wealth. A form of patient (or 'slow') capital that is socially embedded, co-ops are resilient, add stability to local economies and offer neutral spaces where diverse peoples can meet. They are accountable and, while local, are globally networked. Integration of social, economic and environmental interests is routine, as is knowledge sharing. Co-ops address fair trade and fair dealing, innovate services and practices, and serve underserved rural and remote areas. As facilitators and brokers of partnerships between various kinds of organizations and interests, they stabilize and reinvest in local economies, facilitate social integration, and encourage and deepen democratic involvement and social learning.

Yuill Herbert, founder, member and director of Sustainability Solutions Group Workers Co-operative, has worked on projects in community planning, sustainability assessments and green buildings. He described the workings of Mondragon, a 90,000 member co-op in the Basque region of Spain. In 1956, after the Spanish Civil War and its social and economic upheaval, a town of 7,000 looked inward to solve its problems. Using its people, their skills and minimum funding, they organized workers' co-ops that now have grown into an integrated co-op cluster that reaches into many sectors: R&D, a university, construction and engineering. Mondragon co-ops share their surpluses, and allocate profit to R&D, investment, solidarity funds and the

university. After-tax income is distributed to workers as dividends, to the co-op reserve, and to a co-op education fund. Dividends are not released until the member retires or leaves, but they receive interest income as dividends.

Members do not lose their jobs if a sector slows down. They are transferred to another co-op, and if their wages are lower, the solidarity fund tops them up. If workers have to be laid off, they receive 80% of their income for two years, and go back to school. This keeps people and ideas fresh and motivated.

Herbert noted that the Mondragon model might offer solutions to the crisis in farming. He suggested that the NFU create a mechanism to determine the nature and structure of farmers' participation in the economy, with the goal to dictate to the economy what farmers will provide and what farmers need, instead of the economy dictating to them. He also suggested that the NFU create self-investment mechanisms that challenge traditional investment models (e.g., an investment company that guarantees loans to co-ops).

April Bourgeois was unable to attend because of bad weather, but Yuill Herbert provided a summary of her presentation about multi-stakeholder co-ops (MSC). MSCs comprise members from two or more classes of co-ops: consumer, producer, retail, housing, etc. They started in Italy (1991) with two types to provide social services to communities. One provides 85% of Italy's social, health, education and recreational services. The other provides gainful employment to disadvantaged workers, with the state paying employee benefits.

MSC require workers and consumers to work in solidarity with each despite their opposing interests (e.g. high wages for workers versus low prices for retail goods). Those social and economic tensions play out in a common governance structure, requiring the internalization of debates about how to share risks and rewards and how to collaborate toward outcomes everyone is proud of. Surprisingly, despite its complexities, the MSC model works and is being used more frequently.

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NFU Convention Closing Address

- Terry Boehm, President

In his closing address, returning National President, Terry Boehm said that the theme of this year's convention offers inspiration. He acknowledged Harold Chapman, a long-time co-op organizer, who shared his wisdom with us during the *Weathering the Storm* panel and who offered some concrete suggestions about how we can help people learn and absorb the information about strengthening co-ops. In this way, we can build on the wisdom of the past.

Boehm said that while we are moving forward, many valuable mechanisms of the past – the Canadian Grain Commission, the Canadian Wheat Board, freight rate legislation, and others – are being lost. In a much larger context, there are the so-called “trade” deals. The result, he stated, is that the environment where we act as citizens has been perverted to serve private interests instead of the public good.

This is opposite to co-operative principles, by which wealth and opportunity is shared as equitably as possible to all in the community. This is also why we form governments: to advance our common interests. But some are using governments to advance their private interests, creating corporate bills of rights.

Whether it is intellectual property protection or trade arrangements, these things have no basis without government. Monsanto without governments is nothing. They need the governments of the world to offer the protections needed to let them maximize their extraction of wealth.

We need to challenge them.

Also at this convention, we had speakers who spoke from the heart about the plight of farmers and the need for us to stand in a place where farmers can recognize us and stand with us.

I know we've organized many protests in the past, including last year's fight to save the Wheat Board. Perhaps the results were somewhat predetermined, but we put up the fight, and we put up the fight for many years. The Board would have been gone long ago without this organization.

Days may look a bit dark at the moment, but we're fighting for what is right. We know our analysis is true. Ultimately, in time, things will turn around. I have no doubt of this. But, it won't happen without putting our shoulder to the wheel and pushing forward.

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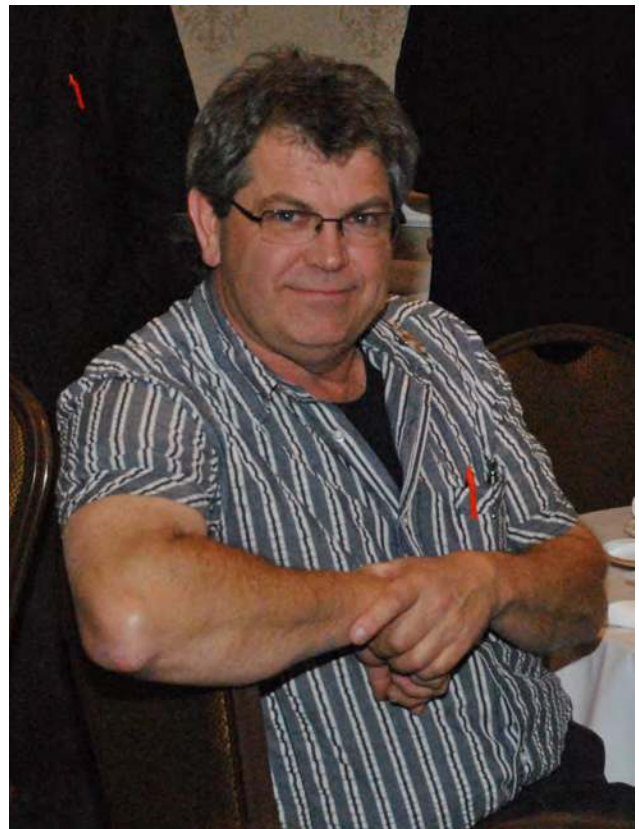


Photo: Bill Gehl of Regina, Saskatchewan received the Grassroots Award for Region 6. Bill thanked his mentors at the NFU and his family for their support and sacrifices as he works with members to improve farmers' lives.

(photo by Carla Roppel)



Agriculture and the New Servitude

- *Andrew Nikiforuk*



What do oil and slavery have to do with each other? That was the subject of Andrew Nikiforuk's presentation at the public event, as he talked about his latest book, *The Energy of Slaves: Oil and the New Servitude*. Nikiforuk is a Canadian author and journalist who has written about education, economics, and the environment for the past two decades.

Nikiforuk started his presentation with a broad overview of slavery, the energy source used by elites of historic civilizations. Slaves were obtained as spoils of war, and wealthy owners offloaded all unpleasant and tedious work, keeping only pleasurable activities for themselves. The institution of slavery began to decline at the same time the steam engine began its rise to prominence, according to Nikiforuk. The moral objection to buying and selling humans was greatly assisted by the invention of labour-replacing machines. Today, fossil fuels are doing work equivalent to that of billions of human slaves.

One hundred years ago, 70% of Americans lived on farms. Today, only 1% do – the result of the introduction to agriculture of oil-based “energy slaves” (machinery and synthetic chemicals). This shift in technology and population has led to dramatic cultural and ecological changes. Nikiforuk pointed out

the relationships between access to oil and the intensity of agriculture, monoculture, dietary changes, food wastage and corporate concentration over time and geographically.

Nikiforuk quoted Ralph Waldo Emerson: “If you put a shackle around the neck of a slave, you are also putting a shackle around your own neck at the same time,” and then posed the question: Does our extreme dependence on oil actually make us into its slaves? Oil has been cheap and easy to get since the late 1800s, but that is changing. The cost of producing oil is rising exponentially and is beginning to have ripple effects throughout world economies.

Within the next five years, Nikiforuk expects great challenges and opportunities to arise. It will be difficult, but he referred to Vaclav Smil's work showing that high energy spending does not guarantee prosperity. Nikiforuk believes the task of transition calls for reducing complexity, slowing down, becoming more rooted in place, being present. He also suggested that farmers once again will be able to call upon their agrarian traditions, skills and community to meet these challenges.

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Trade Agreements and Democracy

Terry Boehm, NFU president and Scott Sinclair, senior researcher with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and director of the Trade and Investment Research project, offered their views and analysis about the latest generation of trade and investment treaties, including CETA and TPP.

Boehm questioned the kind of democracy that exists when citizens, the press or parliamentarians cannot see or to discuss arrangements that will affect them, which he observes as a “systematic attempt to alienate people from their governments and processes and cause them disengage from politics altogether.” It is working, he believes. The Harper government is using the “Shock Doctrine” process of making many changes very rapidly, as described in Naomi Klein’s book of the same title.

Canada’s political process is being systematically dismantled, said Boehm, pointing to the fact that these agreements will not allow us to use the monetary policy instruments typically available to a sovereign nation to address balance of payment issues. “This is a wonderful arrangement for capital - to destabilize and create wild fluctuations in currencies,” he said, because under CETA and TPP, the flow of capital in or out of a country cannot be restricted.

On the intellectual property (IP) front, Boehm described the “most draconian set of enforcement measures” ever seen for real or suspected IP infringement. A farmer alleged to have infringed IP rights can be prohibited from planting affected seed or from harvesting a crop under investigation. Land and equipment can be seized to make sure there is property sufficient to ensure that IP rights holder can be compensated for the infringement. Implements and other resources suspected of being used in the alleged infringement can be destroyed at the farmer’s expense. Our courts, in granting these orders, become instruments used to cast enough of a chill over its citizens that we comply completely with conditions imposed by these corporations.

Sinclair calls CETA, TPP and the like ‘external constitutions’ because they affect matters only peripherally related to trade, are intrinsically anti-democratic, shrink democratic space and stop governments from using policy options that might threaten future profits of global corporations. Harper’s government is pursuing the most “aggressive trade and investment agenda in the world,” and a successful CETA will set the stage for a cascade of similar investment treaties.

He described how CETA might affect agriculture, as summarized below:

- The success of supply-managed (SM) sectors depends on excluding exports, and although SM has been severely eroded, he does not see allowing greater access for specialty dairy products (e.g. cheese) to Canada as a mortal blow. The greater danger is that concessions made under CETA immediately set a benchmark for the TPP.
- If, as the EU is demanding, food purchases are included in CETA, the growing local food movement will be hard hit. Public institutions would not be able to use locally-sourced foods, nor could government purchasing be used to support local development initiatives.
- Regarding food safety regulation, Sinclair expects the status quo to hold. Barriers are regulatory (restrictions on GMOs and hormone-treated meat) and the EU is unlikely to move. Under TPP however, expect that sanitary and phyto-sanitary regulations to be harmonized.
- US industry is using the TPP to restrict the rights of government to regulate, but not all government departments agree. There is an opening to work with US allies to influence what goes into or stays out of the TPP.
- Canada is reluctant to accede on geographical indicators, but will have to. Effects should be minimal.
- We need to strengthen our legal regime preserving the free flow of information, research and seeds, and not allow CETA and TPP to erode existing flexibilities.

—nfu—



Therefore Be It Resolved...

RESOLUTIONS PASSED AT THE NFU'S 43RD ANNUAL CONVENTION

NOVEMBER 22ND TO 24TH, 2012 – SASKATOON, SASKATCHEWAN

Lobby Re: Use of Glyphosate

BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU lobby the Federal Government to initiate a thorough and unbiased investigation into the long and short-term effects on soil, plants, and animals of the chemical glyphosate, a widely-used farm herbicide.

Information Dissemination

WHEREAS the NFU needs to increase the audience for information dissemination,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU National Board consider using more technology to connect with farmers and the general public via "email subscription" and "Twitter".

Land Ownership

WHEREAS Saskatchewan contains 46% of the arable land in Canada, and

WHEREAS there have been recent reports of foreign and domestic corporations purchasing large tracts of land in Saskatchewan, and

WHEREAS there have been reports of foreigners incorporating Canadian companies for the purpose of purchasing Saskatchewan land and circumventing Saskatchewan land tenure laws, and

WHEREAS ownership of land implies control over production from that land and control over the disposition of the product from that land,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU support launching a public campaign to raise awareness of the dangers to Canadian food sovereignty from the loss of local land ownership and corporate land purchases of farmland.

Severe Economic Hardship Loans

WHEREAS beef farmers have a class action lawsuit against the Federal Government regarding the Mad Cow situation, and

WHEREAS efforts are being made to have this settled out of court, and

WHEREAS the longer this goes on, the more money will be used for legal fees and very little of the \$7 billion will actually be paid to farmers,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Federal Government be requested to delay collecting the Severe Economic Hardship Loans to beef farmers until the class action lawsuit against the Federal Government regarding the Mad Cow situation is settled.

Ownership of Mineral Resources

WHEREAS given the fact that resource extraction is where Canada's economic growth will occur, and given the fact that ownership of land does not convey mineral rights,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union national body lobby the government of Canada to change the legal rights of land ownership to include ownership of the mineral resources under their ground.

Closure of Federal Experimental Farms

BE IT RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union lobby against the closure of the Hervé J. Michaud Experimental Farm in Bouctouche and all other federal experimental farms.

(continued on page 15...)



Conservation Agreements

WHEREAS twenty (20) years is not sufficient time for conservation agreements,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU support conservation agreement/habitat preservation legislation and oppose any attempt to decrease the longevity of such agreements.

Making Research Results Public

WHEREAS the universities are publicly funded and government funding is put into research programs, and

WHEREAS many private companies use university facilities for their research or support research projects with funding, and

WHEREAS the findings from such research is restricted from publishing,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU lobby federal and provincial governments and universities to make all university research programs and trial results publicly available.

Training and Youth Apprenticeship Program

WHEREAS the NFU has identified the need to assist young farmers wishing to establish a farm operation, and

WHEREAS it takes many skills to run a successful farm, and

WHEREAS well established farmers have gained a wealth of experience throughout their lives working the land, and

WHEREAS currently no recognized means exist to transfer these skills to the next generation, and

WHEREAS this wealth of skills where it is not shared is the greatest loss and biggest threat to the future of family farms,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU research the possibility of setting up an appropriate apprenticeship system either under its auspices or in combination with other farm organizations and/or government.

Seeds and Plants

BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU Board consider striking a committee to deal with seed and plant development, research, and ownership.

NFU Speaker List

WHEREAS the NFU has members who are experts in many different subject areas ranging from international Trade Agreements to intellectual property and plant breeders' rights, and supply management, and

WHEREAS there are events, conferences and conventions that are put on in Canada which are looking for speakers knowledgeable in these areas and have a budget to pay for speakers,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union develop a list of NFU members who are experts on issues pertaining to farming and agriculture who could speak at conferences, conventions and events.

Compensation for Wildlife Refuse on Farm Land

WHEREAS the Bobolink and the Eastern Meadowlark have recently been added to Ontario's species at-risk list, and

WHEREAS a temporary exemption came into effect on June 3, 2011 that allows agricultural activities where Bobolinks and Eastern Meadowlarks habitat to continue during a three-year transition period, and

WHEREAS during that time study of both short and long-term approaches of Bobolink and Eastern Meadowlark protection on the agricultural landscape will be reviewed, and

WHEREAS the Bobolinks' and Eastern Meadowlarks' main habitat is largely fencerows, pasture lands, and with the highest densities occurring in larger, inter-connected hayfields and natural grasslands, and

WHEREAS thousands and thousands of acres across parts of Ontario have been taken out of open

(continued on page 16...)



grasslands, fencerows removed and converted to intensive growth of cash crops, thus completely discouraging the Bobolink and Eastern Meadowlark in those specific areas. This appears to be the real reason why the Bobolink and Eastern Meadowlark are now an endangered species, and

WHEREAS one MNR representative has been quoted as saying, "Most of the endangered species are found in south-western Ontario" (the area of intensive agriculture and cash cropping), and

WHEREAS family farms who are good conservationists and continue to provide a landscape for the habit and feeding of the Bobolink and Eastern Meadowlark should not be punished by restricting certain farm practices when intensive agricultural practices are allowed to continue in areas of Ontario,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union initiate a campaign to address the lack of compensation offered to farmers when wildlife refuges (for certain birds, animals) are required on agricultural lands.

Members Services

WHEREAS the membership in the National Farmers Union has been slowly decreasing, and

WHEREAS the member services such as the Region 5 (Manitoba) tax office is a key way of attracting and retaining membership within the NFU,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Regions of the National Farmers Union identify and organize member service initiatives that will service existing members and attract new members to the National Farmers Union.

NFU Investment Fund

WHEREAS there are members of the NFU who have capital that they are looking to invest, and

WHEREAS there are young farmers and members of the NFU who are looking for capital to start or expand their farming operations, and

WHEREAS there is a mechanism within the Mondragon co-operative where capital from one co-operative can be invested into the operations of another co-operative,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union explore the possibility of setting up a National Farmers Union investment fund that will link and facilitate the investment of NFU members and Associate members with capital into the operations of NFU members who are looking for capital. *(continued on page 17...)*



*Photo:
Whether debating
resolutions or
questioning speakers, the
floor mikes are always
busy at convention.
Don Mills (left),
Lorne Cholin (middle) and
Glenn Tait (right).
(photo by Naomi Friesen)*



Fracking Regulations and Enforcement

WHEREAS the legal regulatory requirements across Canada are lacking proper protection of groundwater and surface water from hydraulic fracturing, and

WHEREAS the current regulatory scheme does not give the operators enough incentive to care, and

WHEREAS the adversely affected individuals and communities will not get appropriate restitution,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU lobby the federal and/or provincial governments to implement the following recommendations:

- Eliminate the due diligence defence. At a minimum, limit the defence by creating a two-tier regulatory scheme that imposes some level of absolute liability for administrative penalties and strict liability for criminal prosecutions.
- Ensure that administrative penalties are set at a level that accurately reflects potential damage.
- Require fracking operators to hold sufficient insurance to be capable of cleaning up groundwater pollution and paying substantial fines or damages.
- Explicitly permit citizens to prosecute fracking operators for statutory violations where the Crown is unwilling to do so.
- Provide the court with explicit authority to impose additional penalties over and above the maximum in the case of negligence.
- Require companies to include a tracer in their fracking fluids so any potential groundwater contamination can be easily linked to a specific fracking operation.
- Ensure that individuals directing fracking operations are held personally liable for statutory and/or common-law violations.



Photo: Jim Robbins (left) and Stewart Wells (right) at the mike.

Transitioning

WHEREAS it is becoming increasingly difficult, in part due to disproportionate land prices, for young farmers to become established in Canada, and

WHEREAS some outgoing farmers may not have family members who are interested in taking over the farm, and

WHEREAS in the NFU many incoming and outgoing farmers share common ideals,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU would make it a priority to establish a forum, either online, in the newsletter or in regional or national meetings, that will connect incoming and outgoing farmers for the purpose of exchanging information about transitioning land or/and farms to young farmers.

Specified Risk Material

WHEREAS Canadians are told policy on Specified Risk Material (SRM) disposal is wasteful and a burden on our economy, and

WHEREAS the USA has for the past number of years a \$14 million research project studying prions,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that as research on prions is ongoing, the NFU lobby the appropriate authorities to re-examine and justify their regulations on Specified Risk Material.

(continued on page 18...)



North Ontario Environmental Lakes Research Project cut by the Federal Government is denounced by the NFU

BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU convention express to the Federal Government and to Canadians that cutting the Environmental Lakes Research Project in Northern Ontario is anti-scientific and anti-Canadian and that this convention call upon the Federal Government to re-establish and continue to fund this project.

Need for Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration Trees

WHEREAS farmers and the public are still concerned about environmental droughts, winds, soil, flora, fauna and the need for trees upon the prairies,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU lobby the respective authorities so that the tree shelterbelt program previously known as the Indian Head PFRA Shelterbelt program remains funded by the Federal Government to provide trees for public benefit of shelter, fruit and lumber.

Differential Land Taxation Policies

WHEREAS agricultural land acquisitions by non-farmers and outside investors are increasing in Canada,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the NFU recommend differential land taxation policies be established with a view to increasing taxes to a point where non-resident investors and non-farm corporations would be discouraged from consolidating farm land holdings.

Responsible Agricultural Investment

WHEREAS there is an initiative to develop guidelines for responsible agricultural investment at the FAO through the CSM,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU provide input to develop Responsible Agricultural Investment guidelines where such possibilities present themselves.

~ end of resolutions ~



National Farmers Foundation Report to Donors

- by **Stuart Thiesson, Treasurer**

This report will cover donations received since our last report up to September 30, 2012. While the National Farmers Foundation (NFF) has full charitable status, donations this past year were over \$1,500 lower than the previous year. This makes it more difficult to potentially finance requests for funding that may come forward. Since we received charitable status in 1996, we have been able to fund over \$80,000 in NFU educational and organizational projects, but we would like to do much more.

The envelope enclosed with this copy of the *Union Farmer* is the only direct membership contact we can afford to make. That's why if you wish to include the NFF as one of your "charities of choice", we invite you to return your envelope with a donation to help us continue our efforts to help finance projects which support and advance the objectives of the NFU. We thank you for your consideration.

DONATIONS: Mary M. Smith, Canmore, AB; Martin & Linda Baumberger, Port Elgin, ON; Linda Marshall, Guelph, ON; Randall Affleck, Bedeque, PE; Linda Makuch, LaSalle, ON; Brenda Dolling, Caledon, ON; R. Bruce Jones, Maple Ridge, BC; Biruta Platryss, Etobicoke, ON; Victor Wellish, Willowdale, ON; Nora Fueten, St. George, ON; Tibor Kiss, St. Catherines, ON; Sr. Catherine Fairbairn, Ottawa, ON; Chandler Davis, Toronto, ON; R. Munson, Toronto, ON; Vivien Jenkinson, Toronto, ON; Tessa Rogers, Barrie, ON; Hannelore Plonka, Napierville, PQ; Westdale United Church, Hamilton, ON; Spencer Baird, Tofino, BC; Estate of Rhoda Stirling, Regina, SK; Karen Pedersen, Cut Knife, SK; Hugh Salmon, Victoria, BC; Annette Desmarais, Saskatoon, SK; Theodore Zafiris, Waterloo, ON; Nicholas Birch, Etobicoke, ON; Maxine Beattie, Prince George, BC; Elizabeth Peters, Thunder Bay, ON; Steven Boyko, Edmonton, AB; Valdis Macins, Kenora, ON; E. Pedersen, Cut Knife, SK; Daniel Monroe, Edmonton, AB; Raymond Morris, Salmon Arm, BC; Jean Thomson, Toronto, ON; Arthur Millward, Winnipeg, MB; Genevieve Gamache, Couquitlam, BC; Merv Johnson, Victoria, BC; Bonnie Lawrence, Saskatoon, SK.

MEMORIAL DONATIONS IN MEMORY OF: *Wilmer Oberg* – Dale Fankhanel, New Norway, AB; George Calvin, New Norway, AB; Harvey Thomas, Alliance, AB; *Paul Beingessner* – Theresa Davies, Regina, SK; *Howard Schoeler* – Walter Zunti, Luseland, SK; M. Pedersen, Cut Knife, SK; *Jack Fletcher* – Roy Atkinson, Saskatoon, SK; J. Neufeld, Waldeck, SK; M. Pedersen, Cut Knife, SK; Carol Lowndes, Kelvington, SK; *Lorne Erickson* – M. Pedersen, Cut Knife, SK; *Thomas & Irene Douglas* – Louise Rogers, Dundas, ON; *Marilyn Gillis, Wayne Katerynych, Bill Bingham* – M. Pedersen, Cut Knife, SK; *Sonia Fix* – Jane Gerlach, Rochester, AB; *Marie Thiesson* – Urban & Mary Laughlin, Summerside, PE; Dale Fankhanel, New Norway, AB; M. Pedersen, Cut Knife, SK; Vilda Laing, Cut Knife, SK; *Jack Layton* – Carel Steele, Edgerton, AB; *Lyle Martin* – Martin & Linda Baumberger, Port Elgin, ON; *Bill Bingham and Fred Bingham* – Ed Pedersen, Cut Knife, SK; *Douglas Leland* – M. Elder, Oak Lake, MB; *Bill Hope* – M. Pedersen, Cut Knife, SK; Vilda Laing, Cut Knife, SK; *Bernadette Zunti* – Marcella Pedersen, Cut Knife, SK; *Errol Laughlin, George O'Connor, Joe MacDonald* – Urban Laughlin, Summerside, PE; *Lester Jorgenson* – Joyce Neufeld, Waldeck, SK, C. Stuart Houston, Saskatoon, SK, E. Wotherspoon, Abbey, SK.

We thank all donors for their support. By choosing the National Farmers Foundation as one of your "charities of choice", you are taking a positive action in supporting our educational and organizational programs in the rural community.

***As a charitable foundation (Registered Number 882622368RR)
all donations are income-tax deductible.***

Remember, our donation envelope is included in this issue of the *Union Farmer*.

We look forward to your valued support! Thank you!

**National Farmers Foundation
2717 Wentz Avenue, Saskatoon, SK S7K 4B6**



The Beingessner Award for Excellence in Writing

The National Farmers Union (NFU) would like to congratulate Marion Studhalter (age 15) of Blyth, Ontario, and Rachel Robertson (age 17) of Paisley, Ontario, who are the winners of the Beingessner Award for Excellence in Writing.

The Beingessner Award is part of the NFU Youth's Campaign for New Farmers, and is given to the authors (age 21 years and under) of the best 500-1000 word essay on agriculture and food issues in Canada. There are two age categories – 15 and under, and ages 16 to 21. The winner from each age category is awarded a prize of \$500. The theme of this year's essay was "Co-ops: An Exercise in Democracy".

The Beingessner Award is named after Paul Beingessner of Truax, Saskatchewan, who passed away in the spring of 2009 in a tragic farm accident. Paul was born on April 26, 1954, and returned to the family farm after obtaining his BA (Hon) in Psychology in 1976 and working with youth in Regina for a few years. 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, and served as general manager from 1991 to 1997. When he left Southern Rails, he stayed on as a board member, and worked with the Ministry of Highways Short Line Advisory Unit supporting other efforts of farmers to start shortline railways. Since 1991, Paul wrote a weekly column on farming and transportation issues with a social justice focus featured in papers across Western Canada. After leaving the government in 1999, his expertise on transportation issues resulted in consulting work across Western Canada and the United States. Beingessner also served as a Saskatchewan Wheat Pool Delegate from 1996 to 1998, and was an ardent supporter of the CWB and ran for the position of director in 2008.

Co-ops: An Exercise in Democracy

—by Marion Studhalter (age 15), Blyth, Ontario

Our modern lifestyles demand more rights and freedom of speech. In Canada specifically, we repeatedly hear about our rights as citizens to have the freedom of speech and the right to make decisions. Democracy is built on the foundation that everybody has the right to represent their idea in government. We tend to call this one "practice of our democratic rights". The logic that we have a say in how things are handled has been adopted to apply to the basic everyday needs and services of people. Co-operatives exercise democracy. They reflect our rights as individuals and operate similar to democracy found in government systems.

Growing up, my family farm has always been the latter in decisions made by the loops we were part of. Our operation of 2000 pigs was small, it was too over-see-able and could not compete with immense farms within the loop. We made a living off the minimum and always received minimum rights and freedom. When decisions were made on the regulations for housing, feeding and handling the animals, the large scale operations would be the ones consulted first who would only think of the benefit it would provide for them. As an example, my family was

part of a loop that had regulations on where you buy your feed, when the piglets have to be tattooed and vaccinated, and where you buy the replacement stock. This limited the freedom of how we farmed and it became extremely hard to compete with the income of our operation. The larger farms with extra employees could apply these regulations and always provided a profit to the loop. It was not long till we were literally kicked out of the loop for not being beneficial.

(continued on page 21...)



Photo: Huron Local President Tony McQuail (left) and Huron Local Director Thea Trick (right) present Marion Studhalter (center) with her Beingessner Award.



In a co-operative, this would not have happened. Co-operatives provide equality, meaning no matter the size of the operation and its profit members have an equal say in the decisions and application of regulations. In these organizations you must be a member to receive the benefits, and everyone has the same benefits. No matter how much profit they provide, or how many shares the members have, each member has an equal say in decision making. This can easily be compared to the democratic government system in Canada, where every citizen, no matter how rich or famous has the same voting right as any other citizen.

Another thing that is different from the loop is that a co-operative cannot remove the membership of the member for not being “beneficial”. The same can be said in a democracy: citizens cannot be stripped of their citizenship for being wealthy. In both systems, there are consequences for abusing the by-laws and laws that are established. This proves that democracy and co-operatives both exercise equal rights within their system.

This leads to the fact that co-operatives are not owned by a single person. As previously stated, everybody has a say when decisions need to be made. The Canadian government is not owned by a single person, or ruled by a single party, as a dictatorship: the government is run by only the citizens. Since a democracy needs to meet the needs of more people, there are members of parliament that are voted in to represent the people of political locations. In a co-op there is no need for representatives, but there is a Board of Directors who do the administration parts within a co-operative. One further point, anyone can become a member, if they pay the membership fee. The same goes for democracy - anyone can become a citizen, as long as they pass the citizenship test and

meet the criteria. This also means that as a citizen of a democracy you can be in the government and as a member of a co-op you can be on the Board of Directors.

To help explain this concept, my family is a member of the Ontario Goat Co-operative, where they paid a membership and administration fee to become a member. As a member we can sell our milk to the co-operative and get a fair price for the milk. The amount of milk we can ship depends on how many shares we have in the co-op. All the milk producers in the co-operative sell their milk at the same price. Also, they hold meetings throughout the year to discuss production and marketing methods. At these meetings, by-laws or regulations can be passed if the majority of the members present agree. To continue, if my parents wanted to, they could run to be a director in the Board of Directors. Like a government election in Canada, the members present at the general meeting vote for the directors. As analyzed previously, democracy in Canada and co-operatives have many similarities and their philosophies overlap. All the people who are part of the system have a right to vote and be part of the administration.

In conclusion, co-operatives exercise democracy in Canada. We are very fortunate to have found a way to practice democracy and make it visible in our day-to-day lives. Co-operatives give family farms the opportunity to survive the pressure of the economy and compete with the industry-focused farms. Co-ops provide more rights to farms and allow a community to form that includes voting to make decisions. These systems mirror the democratic government of Canada and should continue to do so.

—nfu—

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.
- Your essay should deal with the topic “*What should governments do to help tomorrow’s farmers succeed?*” You may create your own title.
- Deadline for entries is October 15, 2013.
- The prizes of \$500.00 will be awarded at the NFU Convention in November 2013.
- 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).



Co-ops: An Exercise in Democracy

—by Rachel Robertson (age 17), Paisley, Ontario

Co-operative. What does the word mean? The first time one hears it they might think it has something to do with a group of people co-operating to get a job done. And they would be mostly right. The Oxford Dictionary refers to a co-operative as: “*noun*: A farm, business, or other organization which is owned and run jointly by its members, who share the profits or benefits. *adj.*: Involving mutual assistance in working towards a common goal.” This means that instead of a group of business men sitting around a big table making decisions about the direction in which a crop or business will go, the farmers and people involved in growing or producing can make those decisions. It cuts out the middle person. The person who buys or produces the product can be directly involved in its distribution and profit. There are many such organizations and businesses all over the world. Worldwide there are almost one billion members who have ownership of a co-operative. In Ontario alone there are approximately 1,300 co-operatives functioning in over 400 rural areas, towns and cities.

One might think, “How does that affect *me*? I don’t care.” The fact is it does. Co-operatives bring the production and decision making onto home soil. Instead of someone far away making the decisions about what you buy in your local grocery store, it could be the man down the road or that woman who walks right by your door on her way to work every morning helping to make those decisions. Another question a person might have could be something along the lines of, “Does this *really* work? I mean so many voices and opinions in one room. Nothing would ever get done!” Now that could in fact happen, as has been demonstrated in the past. But for some strange reason, and some would do good to learn from this, it works the majority of the time.

A co-operative functions in somewhat the same way as a democracy. The owners or providers of the



service work together with other members in order to make decisions and bring the service to the public. The members of a co-operative see it in a fairly positive light. “It is a way of working together to try to deal with the external factors that can sometimes affect your business and your life. You can try and make sure that you can change those. External factors that you can’t control such as government regulations and the like,” says Stewart Slater, member of Organic Meadow Farmers Co-operative, Quadro Communication

Co-op, Ontario Natural Food Co-op and Mountain Equipment Co-op. “You feel like you have people you can look to for support that are going through the same kind of experience as you are and you feel like you can trust them more because they have the same stakes in the co-op that you do. You feel like people are concerned just as much about how you’re doing as how they’re doing.”

This year, 2012, has been made the international year of the co-operative in order to raise public awareness about its existence and function. Co-operatives have existed in human history for as long as humans have been organizing and working together. Over time they have been used for many different functions, such as assistance with savings or selling oatmeal. Anything that one could sell or provide a service for could be made into a co-operative. People have been working together for centuries in this sort of workforce. And it seems to be working. Perhaps the song “Solidarity Forever” describes it best, “When the union’s inspiration through the workers’ blood shall run/There can be no power greater anywhere beneath the sun/Yet what force on earth is weaker than the feeble strength of one/But the union makes us strong.” We are stronger when we are together and working for the needs of all not just the needs of the one. This is the point of a co-operative.

—nlu—



(Report from the President, from page 3)

This is, of course, the text that forbids government from favouring local businesses in any way. The text then goes on to say “*With regard to a covered procurement, a Party, including its procuring entities, shall not seek, take account of, impose or enforce any offset.*”

Now what is an offset? This is how it is defined in the agreement: “*offset means any condition or undertaking that encourages local development or improves a Party’s balance of payments accounts, such as the use of domestic content, the licensing of technology, investment, counter-trade and similar action or requirement.*”

It is there in black and white: we cannot do anything as a public to protect our economy or balance of payments, or create local development. There are, of course, no conditions imposed on how private enterprise conducts itself, how it purchases, or whom it patronizes.

No wonder these texts are kept secret. In another time, any government or any individual doing such things would be tried for high treason. We have to hold accountable our governments at all levels, our press, trade negotiators, and others who willingly and sometimes blindly endorse these types of agreements. Let’s call it for what it is: TREASON!

In Solidarity, Terry Boehm

Transportation Level of Service Legislation More Government Hype than Farmer Help

- by Terry Boehm

The federal government has announced legislation to require Canada’s railways to enter into level of service agreements with shippers. Under the proposed legislation, the railways would have to complete a level of service agreement with a shipper within 30 days of the shipper’s request. These would be confidential commercial agreements. If an agreement is not reached a shipper can request binding arbitration after giving 15 days notice to the railways. At that point, Transport Canada arbitrators would have 45 days to make a ruling which would be binding on both parties for a year. If the railways do not live up to the terms of the agreement fines of up to \$100,000.00 per violation can be imposed. Shippers have widely welcomed these changes.

However, several problems present themselves with this legislation. First, it sets up a system where level of service arrangements are not transparent, and at the end of the day shippers are negotiating with the two federal railways who know the shippers have no alternatives but to move their product with them. In a confidential arrangement, the railways will essentially spell out a fee-for-service program to the shipper who will not know what other players in the system are paying for their service.

In addition, there is the possibility that this will create a defacto bid car system to obtain railcars for shipping. We have now moved from a somewhat predictable car allocation system with the old CWB coordinating a large part of grain shipping with published tender results to an opaque system of individual contracts.

All of this will likely increase the cost of shipping, which will be transferred back to the farmer. The farmer is not considered a shipper, but the grain companies are, and they will focus on access to service more than cost. Farmers are concerned with both service and cost as they in the end pay for all the costs. These costs have increased substantially, and the federal government has steadfastly refused to institute a costing review of the railways with a view to rolling back freight rates to farmers.

The railways are now capturing more than 100 million dollars annually in excess profits than what is established as normal in the rail industry. This is, of course, after they have externalized costs onto farmers, forcing them to haul grain themselves to many fewer delivery points as a result of branchline demarketing and closure. Farmers also have had to build much more on farm storage as a result.

Farmers clearly deserve to see freight rates rolled back, as they have contributed dearly to these excess profits of the railways. If the federal government wanted to do something that would really help farmers, it would institute a costing review of the railways and then roll back rates for farmers to share the so-called efficiency gains made by the railways. In the past, this is what used to happen every 4 years.



NFU BOARD MEMBERS AND OFFICES

Regional Offices:

Region 1: Tax: 559 Route 390, Rowena, NB E7H 4N2 Ph: (506) 273-4328

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8	Banquet and Awards	
9	<u>Reports</u> - Women's Caucus; Youth Caucus; International Program Committee	
10	<u>Implications of Trade Deals for Democracy and Economy</u> – Terry Boehm, Scott Sinclair	
11	<u>CWB Court Cases: The Rule of Law and Democracy</u> – Stewart Wells, Arthur Schafer	
12	<u>Co-Ops: Putting Food Sovereignty into Action</u> – Abra Brynne, Harvey Knight, Janice Sanford Beck	
13	Closing	

DAY 1
Session 1 - 4

DAY 2
Session 5 - 8

DAY 3
Session 9 - 13

