

THE union farmer

QUARTERLY

Spring 2013



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Photo: Tony McQuail with grandson Elliot at the October 24 protest against the proposal for Co-Existence for GMO Alfalfa and Natural Alfalfa held in Kitchener, Ontario, organized by the NFU. (photo provided by Tony McQuail)

Message from the Editor...



Carla Roppel

It's been almost five months since I rejoined the NFU. So far I've survived the annual convention, an unreasonable request from the Appeals Tribunal for pages and pages of documentation (to no

avail), two issues (almost) of the *Union Farmer Quarterly* and a National Board meeting. I think it's going as it should – too much work and too little time in a very farmer-UNfriendly political environment!

This all got me to thinking about the democratic process, how it works (or doesn't) and what it is needed for success. At a minimum, it requires that everyone has access to all information needed to make an informed decision. As well, while a majority vote constitutes a win, a democratic process provides forums that allow the expression of minority opinions, and also allows those opinions the potential to influence the subject under debate. Finally, a democratic process must facilitate broad-based consultation among stakeholders.

These days, however, the Harper government is unabashedly not meeting these minimum standards.

In fact, groups with vested interest in particular subjects are deliberately excluded from consultation. Take Minister Ritz's recent pre-budget consultation with farmers near Saskatoon. That meeting had been scheduled to take place the week after it actually happened. Not everyone originally invited to the (later) meeting was notified of the change, including at least one NFU member, invited and confirmed to attend the original meeting. Ritz's decision to change the date and notify only the 'friendlies' – those who speak the same language and who want to sit with elected but undemocratic government representatives – was rude and disrespectful at the least, and undemocratic at the worst.

So much for broad-based consultation! Years ago, I read an article by Sherry R. Arnstein that really explained what most of us find frustrating about the term 'consultation' and how citizen participation can be dressed up to seem more important than it turns out to be. Arnstein published A Ladder of Citizen Participation in 1969, but its premise is as true now as it was then. Ms. Arnstein uses the diagram shown (on page 20) to describe citizen participation in "how information is shared, goals and policies are set, tax resources are allocated, programs are operated, and benefits like contracts and patronage are parceled out." She speaks of the difference between the "empty ritual of participation" and "having the real power needed to affect the outcome...".

(continued on page 20...)

union farmer quarterly

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



A message from the...



National President

—by Terry Boehm

Greetings and good luck for this spring's growing season. I would like to thank all of our membership for their support. I would also like to recognize those members who have passed away. Their wisdom and long support have been essential in making the NFU what it is.

We have had some difficult times in the last number of months, and in December we were refused accreditation under the Ontario Farm Business Registration program. This program requires farm operators in Ontario to register their farm businesses and a fee is required. This can be directed towards an accredited organization for membership. We are now not on the list for this upcoming year after having been for several years. This could have a significant impact on our membership numbers in Ontario and will result in significantly reduced revenues for NFU-O and the NFU nationally. We hope Ontario members maintain their loyalty outside of the program and join us directly, mitigating this situation somewhat.

The NFU has always worked for the interests of ordinary farmers and has always spoken the truth to power. We have never been afraid to stand up to governments, corporations (no matter how large and powerful), and those who would work to steal farmer's just returns. We have always been in the forefront in protests, court battles, and in proposing constructive measures to advance farmer's economic and social interests. This does generate enemies who would like to see the NFU destroyed. We will not be silenced however, and will continue to stand up for farmers and ordinary citizens alike. This is our heritage, and our vision is formed through democratic debate and policy resolutions. This is why we are so hard to destroy or be silenced.

We are now confronted with the completion of CETA, the end of the single desk CWB; an emasculated Canadian Grain Commission; a concerted attack on farmer's seed saving, reuse, and exchange rights; land grabbing; and a supply management system in jeopardy. It is only the NFU that will see through these attacks and call them what they are. We will continue to fight to maintain what is beneficial, oppose what is harmful and exploitative, and bring forward positive ideas for improving the lot of small and medium sized family farmers – and often the lot of all farmers no matter their size and type of agriculture. Stick with us. This organization is as necessary now as it ever was. Thank you.

In Solidarity, Terry Boehm

What does your contract say?

The NFU has become aware that farmers are being required to sign grain contracts containing clauses or conditions that the companies have no right to include. We want to determine how common this practice is across Canada, and document the specific clauses or conditions that are being required.

We need your help to do this research and to compile information that farmers can use to protect their rights before signing contracts. If you are willing to support this project, please make copies of any contracts you have signed – with all sensitive or personal information blacked out – and fax or mail the copies to:

National Farmers Union
2717 Wentz Avenue, Saskatoon, SK S7K 4B6
FAX: 306-664-6226

Thank you in advance for your support!



A message from the...



Women's President

— by Joan Brady

At a recent face-to-face meeting, the NFU Board spent some time in a strategic planning exercise. The Board was asked to list the strengths and weakness of the organization, as well as external factors that appeared as threats and opportunities. Each Board member was given the opportunity to offer their thoughts on each of the categories.

It was quite clear that one of the NFU's strengths is its organizational structure. The various levels of activity, the policy development process and the membership-driven values are equally relevant and powerful today, as they were when the NFU was initiated over forty years ago. We can be thankful for the fine tuning and deliberate care that caused the NFU design team to replicate the best and proven structures and characteristics provided by its provincial predecessors.

NFU members are another recognized strength and asset. We are a diverse and dedicated group of farmers representing various sectors of agriculture, many as leaders in efficiency and innovation, as well as associate members who care about our food future. Together, we have a collective understanding of the issues, and a tenacious passion to work in the interest of farm families and Canadian food sovereignty. Another related strength is our ability to partner and collaborate with other groups and individuals working towards social, economic and environmental justice. Long-held NFU policy positions and causes are being recognized as critical action points and the NFU has been glad to stand in solidarity to provide a sustainable future for all Canadians and our peasant allies around the world.

An honest assessment of any organization includes the admission that weakness and threats do exist. One challenge that has limited the NFU in the past number of years has been lack of resources. We have overtaxed budgets, overtaxed staff and leadership, and a membership that is often challenged to manage farms, families and – more

often than not – off-farm jobs, which restricts their ability to get involved. With limited resources, it is critical to plan and prioritize to achieve the best possible outcomes.

I often describe the NFU as small but mighty, stepping up to “Goliath” tasks with a can-do attitude. We are often dwarfed by the opposition. Issues and the introduction of policies that disadvantage farmers are increasing in number, frequency and complexity, while at the same time our democratic ability to respond is being eroded in a myriad of ways. It takes a great deal of positive energy to stay the distance and continue the fight, especially when surrounded by the general apathy of many of those around us.

Opportunities do exist however. Food is unifying. Everyone must eat, and as various issues appear, more and more people get involved. Evidence is mounting that the current food system does not work for farmers nor consumers, and that to change anything, we will need to regain our power within the system. There are many opportunities to partner; the NFU's recent decision to support the “Idle No More” movement and our long-time relationship with La Via Campesina are good examples. Food sovereignty is becoming more widely understood and is acknowledged as preferential to a corporate for-profit decision-making paradigm.

Personally, I am looking forward to following the strategic planning process further – to develop actions that will benefit the NFU and its members into the future. Together, building on our strengths and addressing our weaknesses and the threats we face, we can grow both our organization and our influence on a sustainable future. I encourage all of you to share your thoughts, concerns and encouragement as the Board follows through with this important process.

In Union, Joan Brady



A message from the...



Alex Fletcher,
Youth Vice President

Youth

—BY ALEX FLETCHER, YOUTH VICE PRESIDENT

The annual Youth gathering is just around the corner and we are busy getting ready. This year's youth meeting will take place in Tatamagouche, NS from March 22-24. The focus will be on engagement with the goal of strengthening our ability to reach out to, and mobilize, young farmers in our respective communities and regions. We are fortunate to have Joan Brady on board to help plan and facilitate the sessions and to be able to host the event at Waldegrave Farm, the community land trust where Cammie Harbottle lives and farms. Waldegrave Farm is an inspiring place to hold the gathering; it is a model of an alternative to private land ownership, of intentional community, and of a successful farm business.

As we have been organizing for this event, I have also been thinking back to my first trip to Tatamagouche and Waldegrave three years ago to participate in my first NFU Youth gathering. At the time the NFU was totally new to me; I didn't grow up on a farm and had only started a market garden with my partner a couple years earlier on Vancouver Island. Initially I was interested in the idea of self-sufficiency and attracted to the independence that farming offered. I quickly realized, however, how critical it was to have the support of other knowledgeable and resourceful farmers in our area. I realized that if I really wanted to contribute to food sovereignty it was essential to find ways to work with other farmers to address common challenges, advance practical solutions and build a strong, unified voice. The idea of joining a farmers' union and getting together with a bunch of young farmers from across the country became very appealing.

I was, however, also a bit skeptical. Being in my mid/late 20's, I didn't really think of myself as qualifying as a "youth". By most standards I wouldn't have. The Oxford dictionary defines youth as *"the period between childhood and adult age"*. In Canada, depending on the province or territory, minors officially become adults

at the age 18 or 19. As I soon learned however, due to the rapidly declining number of young farmers, the relative age of agricultural youth has increased in recent decades.

According to Statistics Canada, in 1991 there were around 78,000 farmers under the age of 35 in Canada. In 2011, the last census

year currently available, there were around 24,000, a drop of roughly 70% in 20 years.

Accordingly, during this period the NFU has amended its constitution three times to change its definition of "youth". The upper limit is now at 35 years. This is the nouveau "youth" of Canadian agriculture. It is a clear reflection of the critical state we are in.

At that first youth meeting in Tatamagouche, I learned about the history and values of the NFU and the important issues that the NFU was advocating for. I met young farmers doing inspiring work with whom I could relate because we shared many common goals, dreams and challenges. And I got to see Waldegrave Farm, living proof of what is possible when passionate, dedicated people work together with a common vision. A few things became clear to me. I was dedicated to farming and I was not doing it alone. I was part of a bigger movement; a movement dependent on the cooperation of many farmers; a movement that needed more young farmers. As the late NFU member John Wilcox said: "the big thing we need is a re-incarnation of Canada's food farmers. We need to grow more farmers before we grow more food...and there is no real way that you can farm successfully in a community today where a critical mass of farms doesn't exist. We've got to help each other."

This is why the NFU is important to me; it's why I am looking forward to this year's NFU Youth gathering and why I want to engage more young farmers in the NFU.

Alex Fletcher and Cammie Harbottle



Cammie Harbottle,
Youth President



Regional Reports



REGION

ONE (PEI & N.B.)



- Prince Edward Island by
Randall Affleck

Lands Protection Act

Horace Carver Q.C., has been appointed by the Ghiz government as Commissioner under the Public Inquirers Act to study the adequacy of land holding limits, options for reducing red tape and other matters related to the Lands Protection Act. The NFU was instrumental in getting this crucial piece of legislation enacted in 1982 under the Angus MacLean government, of which Mr. Carver was a cabinet minister and sponsored the legislation.

The Act permits land ownership by bona fide individual farmers up to 1,000 acres and farming corporations up to 3,000 acres. It also regulates the amount of land and shore frontage non-residents can own.

The December 2009 report of the Commission on Land and Local Governance recommended that the aggregate land holdings remain unchanged. Cavendish Farms, a processing company who also grow potatoes, were the only presenter to recommend the limits be raised at that time.

The Carver Commission is holding public consultations in February with a report due to be presented to Government in June 2013. The NFU will be presenting a brief recommending that the legislation not be changed.

Land Development Corporation

The Government of Prince Edward Island committed to establish a Land Development Corporation to help young farmers enter the industry. Agriculture Minister George Webster stated in the Legislature this fall that the program will be run by the Department of Innovation and Advanced Learning. The goal is to allow a transition of land to move from generation to generation. He has seen a working draft of the proposal.

Special Economic Hardship Advance Payments Program

Under the 2008 severe economic hardship advances, P.E.I. had 156 livestock loans totalling more than \$17 million advanced under the Advance Payment Program, all of which must be paid back.

Since 2007, we have lost approximately 80% of our hog producers and 50% of our beef producers. Beef producers have never really recovered from the BSE crisis of 2003, and prices have not rebounded strongly enough to be paid back according to the schedule required under legislation. The SEHAPP has been rolled over two times.

Recently, the federal government has extended the default repayment period for the hog industry to ten years and up to nine years for beef producers.

- New Brunswick by Betty Brown



We are experiencing the coldest winter in five years with very little snow, which will probably play havoc with winter cereal crops and the hay crop.

On March 7 - 9, Region 1 NFU will host a booth at the Farm Mechanism Show at the Coliseum in Moncton.

Final plans are under way for our March 16, 2013 AGM to be held at the Petitcodiac Legion, Petitcodiac, NB. For further information please visit our web site (<http://nfunb.org/en/>) or contact Mel at 506-538-1189.

We are participating in discussions with the provincial government regarding the Farm Land Identification Program, and offering suggestions on the off-road tire disposal levy program.

We continue to work on a New Brunswick food label for producers.

In Union,

Randall Affleck and Betty Brown



REGION

THREE (Ontario)



- by Ann Slater

Land Prices

One of the topics discussed during a recent Region 3 local presidents' conference call was the price of farmland in Ontario, and where new and young farmers could still afford to buy land – in the eastern and northern parts of the province. How high will it go and when will it stop are common discussion topics in coffee shops and anywhere else farmers gather to chat, at least in my end of the province. Farm Credit Canada says that farmland prices increased by 16.3% in the first half of 2012. In my neighbourhood, land was going for around \$12,000 an acre a year or two ago; by this past summer, prices were hitting \$18,000 or more.

As to the reasons for the dramatic increase – there are almost as many theories as there are farmers, but high commodity prices and low interest rates are likely a couple of the contributing factors. These high prices for farmland are accelerating the path Ontario is already on – to fewer, larger and more specialized farms which are increasingly tied to a handful of input suppliers and buyers. This trend to larger farms and fewer farmers has other far-ranging impacts on our landscape, on our communities, on the tax burden carried by farmers in rural municipalities, on our ability to provide food for ourselves and on whether or not we are creating a place for young farmers.

Our 2010 report, "Losing Our Grip: How a Corporate Farmland Buy-up, Rising Farm Debt, and Agribusiness Financing of Inputs Threaten Family Farms and Food Sovereignty," highlighted some of the changes in farmland ownership in Canada. Within the NFU we are talking about and looking into what corporate and investor ownership of farmland (land grabbing) looks like

in the Canadian prairies and in the global south. In Ontario, much of our discussion around 'land grabbing' has focused on the loss of prime farmland to industrial, residential and aggregate developments. There is a question, often a silent question, about who is financing and backing the purchase of farmland for farming in Ontario – or are farmers just putting themselves deeper into debt?

Do we have much of a handle on what land grabbing of farmland for growing food (as opposed to land grabbing for development) looks like in Ontario? One of the discussion topics at the Region 3 Convention on March 2 is "Places to Farm: Issues and Strategies for Farmland Access". I will be keeping my fingers crossed that the discussion leads to some sparks of wisdom among NFU members as to how we can keep farmland in the hands of farmers and make space for more farmers across the province.

Accreditation Update

As Region 3 members know, we had our application for accreditation under the Farm Registration and Farm Organizations Funding Act dismissed by the OMAFRA Appeals Tribunal on December 19. This means that farmers cannot join the NFU-Ontario through the Farm Business Registration program in 2013. Ontario members will receive an insert with this issue of the Union Farmer Quarterly, outlining how to get an FBR number and continue to be a member and supporter of the NFU. Despite the (temporary?) loss of accreditation, the NFU in Ontario and across the country continues to speak up for family farms and food sovereignty. **We need your support** – please make sure you send us your 2013 NFU membership.

As of February 7, 2013, we have not received the reasons for the decision given to us on December 19. Did the tribunal panel have reasons for its December 19 decision or was the decision known before the hearing on December 14?

In Union, Ann Slater



REGION

FIVE (Manitoba)



- by Ian Robson

We've been busy in Region 5. I attended the Manitoba Conservation District Convention 2012 in Brandon in December where there was a lot of talk about Conservation Agreements. Some municipalities want to shorten the length of CAs from perpetuity to 20 years or less. I talked with councilors and our Minister of Water Stewardship, Gord Mackintosh about this, and also wrote a letter to the government asking that they maintain the status quo, and not shorten the length of CAs.

I noticed a CPR ad in the Brandon Sun saying that producer car loading sites at Killarney and Shoal Lake would be abandoned. We put out an NFU press release about this, and also about changes to the Canadian Grain Commission. I got several media calls about the release and talked about farmer access to producer cars. I raised the question with reporters that Minister Ritz previously told the railroads to keep this service. Obviously, his position has changed. The press didn't take up that point.

We continue to ask the Minister of Ag about stable funding in Manitoba. Three times we have requested that the NFU have the chance to participate in how stable funding legislation is set up, but to date, have had no reply, even though we have met briefly with the Premier and the Minister has indicated interest. We want to avoid the Ontario model and the resulting confusion.

We have asked to meet with the provincial Ag Minister to talk about several issues in addition to stable funding. We are concerned about proposed changes to the Manitoba Beef Producers Association's by-laws. If members ask for a refund of fees, they are considered non-members and cannot vote about issues related to beef – even though they continue to raise cattle. If there's time, we may also talk about GMO alfalfa and Triffid flax – especially since the flax contamination was no fault of the farmer but has reduced crop insurance coverage.

We are working on the agenda for the Region 5 Convention to be held in July 2013. We are talking

with Prof. Martin Entz who will speak about corporate funding of ag research and his organic farm research at the U of M Carman site.

We're setting up a series of kitchen meetings before seeding to talk to young NFU farmers and potential members. We're aiming to have 6 or 8 young farmers at each meeting – a mix of members and non-members – to introduce the NFU: what it does for farmers and why.

Bill Gehl, Ken Imhoff, Rob Cowan and I met with Ron Kostyshyn, the Manitoba Minister of Agriculture, about the Canadian Wheat Board Alliance at Ag Days. We asked the Minister to find a qualified third party to research and assess the effect of post-CWB changes on farmers – perhaps a U of M or U of W researcher. We also asked the Minister to hold a vote of all wheat and barley growers before setting up a provincial wheat or barley commission. We asked why farmers should depend on insurance for farm income. Why not just have farmers submit a bill for the food we raise – kind of like a plumber would give you a bill for work done!

I noticed the Canadian International Grains Institute booth at Ag Days and spoke to the people there. They were new and didn't know anything of the history of the CIGI or the CWB and how they worked together. After I told them what had happened and how it was done, the staff were taken aback by the anti-democratic actions of the government. I told them they might get fired if they talk with Earl Geddes.

The CWB was at Ag Days, and Gord Flaten spoke, saying that it cost taxpayers \$350 M to wind down the CWB. All CWB assets now belong to the government of Canada: the building and contents, rail cars, ships, and a contingency fund worth about \$180 - \$200 M in August. There seems to be no value for goodwill. Bill Gehl and I asked Flaten (in the presence of the WP and MB Co-operator reporters) about the CWB making money from upgrading grain on its way to port, and about demurrage. I wonder if farmers should try to set up a real co-op model to replace the CWB?

Minister Ritz showed up at Ag Days and asked to speak for 5 minutes. He wasn't mentioned on the agenda. Bill Gehl and I butted into his press scrum afterwards and were able to ask a pointed question about cuts to wheat breeding programs – which he denied. Dean Harder has a video record of both Flaten and Ritz at Ag Days. (continued on page 9...)



(Region 5 Report, from page 8)

I did a video presentation as an individual farmer (i.e. not officially representing the NFU) to the Federal Standing Committee on Agriculture on February 5 about the grains and oilseeds supply chain. Stewart Wells was also there. They seemed more interested in whether we were officials with the NFU than in what we were presenting.

I'd like to collect the email addresses of R5 members so that we can set up 'Hot Lists' on various issues. Please contact the national office at 306-652-9465 or nfu@nfu.ca with your email address, as well as the issues you are most interested in (for example, hogs, wheat, pulses, etc.).

We have several upcoming engagements:

- Talking to 60 U of M Aggies about the NFU on February 27.
- NFU seed policy to the Canadian Mennonite University.
- Seedy Saturday, March 9, 2013.
- Fred Tait, Bev Stow and I will meet with Manitoba Agricultural Services Corp on February 25 at Portage la Prairie about provincial crop insurance and farm loans.

In Union, Ian Robson

SIX (Saskatchewan)

REGION



- by Ed Sagan

We had our NFU Board meeting in Saskatoon on January 27 and 28, 2013. I really appreciated seeing that so many members could come out. That had to be the coldest day of the year!

Glenn Tait, Matt Gehl and I are calling all 160 lapsed members in Saskatchewan. So many have not had their membership updated. We have a big job to do.

The highest court in Canada refused to hear our CWB hearing because Harper has appointed 66 Conservative judges to its ranks. Forty-one of those judges make healthy contributions to the Tory Party of Canada. That is what you call justice.

In North-East Saskatchewan, we keep the press busy. I was interviewed by radio, TV, and two local papers. Our members have been putting out many great news releases about what is happening in farming, but unfortunately, it is not great news.

Farm loans have increased to \$66.4 billion. The Farm Debt Review Board has indicated that if you run a 1,000 acre farm, you could carry \$1 million in debt.

Land is selling for as much as \$3,000 an acre. All land buying in Saskatchewan is done by ten big land corporations, with many holding as much as 300,000 acres. So much for small farming operations!

In the corporate world, we have partnership capital where four big machinery companies lease out their equipment to those farming corporations. Ten financial investment corporations are doing the lending to those farming corporations. What chance does the average farmer have – either to buy additional land or borrow capital?

I made a presentation to Justin Trudeau and Martha Hall Findlay of the Liberal Party of Canada, who supported the Canadian Wheat Board. But Ms. Findlay indicated that all marketing boards must go, as the consumer pays too much for milk, eggs and chicken. I also made a presentation to the four people running for the leadership of the NDP in Saskatchewan.

In Solidarity, Ed Sagan



A word from Matt Gehl, Region 6 Board Member:

Immediately after national convention, I managed to lock down the @NFURegion6 Twitter handle, although apprehension about saying anything that could be detrimental to the organization has seen it go thus far unused.

In the first week of January, the National Farmers Union was invited, along with members of the Canadian Wheat Board Alliance, to attend a meeting with Liberal MP Ralph Goodale in Regina. At the meeting, a letter was given to Mr. Goodale to present to the Liberal Caucus and all of their potential leadership candidates. The letter outlines what the CWBA and like-minded farmers expect in terms of agricultural policy from the federal Liberal Party moving forward. As always, we were well received by Mr. Goodale, but have not received any feedback from the federal Liberal Party as to the ideas put forth in the letter.

Bill Gehl of the CWBA and I attended a meeting of the Treaty 4 Grassroots Movement, one of the local aboriginal organizations involved with Idle No More in the province. They seemed very excited at the prospect of an alliance with farm groups. The CWBA and NFU were invited to an INM demonstration in Fort Qu'Appelle the following week but inclement weather forced us to miss it.

Recently, the National Farmers Union has been invited to a strategy/planning session hosted by the Canadian Wheat Board Alliance which will take place following the conclusion of that group's AGM in Regina. The NFU will be represented at this event.

And finally, I am in the final stages of completing an op ed on how RRSPs are involved in the increasing levels of land grabbing and speculation in the prairies. It should be published soon.

In Union, Matt Gehl

A word from Glenn Tait, Region 6 Board Member:

Recently federal Ag Minister Gerry Ritz informed the Government of Saskatchewan that he was abandoning his responsibility for 1.78 million acres of PFRA pasture land here and transferring title to the province. The first thought of provincial Ag Minister Lyle Stewart was to sell immediately to the highest bidder (making the general revenue fund look better without raising taxes), but rancher backlash made him change his plans.

At a Saskatoon meeting hall full of pasture patrons in January, Minister Stewart said that now the pastures were still for sale or lease but only to the 1,800 current users and only in the current blocks. The land would be subject to a 'no break - no drain' easement. I point out here that in the past few years, desperate land owners and even municipal governments from Saskatoon to Winnipeg have often broken existing laws to drain soggy land. The Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation might also point out that the profit motive may put species currently protected on federal land at higher risk.

At the meeting, ranchers voted to create an organization to lobby and negotiate with one voice. They hope to delay the sale of the land for two years, or perhaps to convince the province not to sell at all and to run the whole system as the feds used to. Chiefs Roland Crowe and Wayne Semagenis from the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations were also there to offer that the FSIN could be the government in charge, that the PFRA pastures would go a long way to fulfilling the obligations of the Treaty Land Entitlement agreements.

None of the reasons Lyle Stewart mentioned for selling the pastures were insurmountable, or even particularly difficult. Let's hope he sees how important it is to preserve these pastures and ecosystems for future generations.

In Union, Glenn Tait



REGION

SEVEN (Alberta)



- by Jan Slomp

Post Single Desk

The activities of the former CWB were fairly transparent, making it possible to monitor the movement of grain from the prairies to port. Now, it only appears that grain is moving, but there are many ships at anchor waiting to be loaded in the port of Vancouver. Most of us knew that the waiting time for freighters would go up after the single desk was gone. What we now realize, seeing these ships at anchor, is that any associated increases in costs will eventually be subtracted from the farm gate price.

Ken Larsen reports that the premium for higher protein wheat is gone and the premium for malt barley is now trivial. There should still be price premiums for the highest quality wheat, but the private trade is now 'harvesting' them because, as our dear leader Gerry Ritz said, "Farmers' interests in their grain end when it hits the elevator pit." With the single desk, we owned the grain until it landed at the customer's factory.

Fracking and ground water protection

NFU Region 7 has formally joined a larger coalition, spearheaded by the Council of Canadians, opposed to the energy sector's virtually unregulated and uncontrolled practice of hydraulic fracturing. Fracking involves pumping large volumes of water, sand, nitrogen and undisclosed toxic and carcinogenic chemicals into hydrocarbon-drenched geological layers to break up the rock and release the oil.

Fracking is done beneath the potable water table, supposedly to reduce the likelihood of contamination. Peer reviewed research shows that in more than 5% of all fracking jobs, these toxic fluids do leak into aquifers. Hydraulic fracturing has been done before, but what is new these days

is the large volume of toxic fluid used and the mind-boggling force (40,000 HP) used to pump those fluids into the formation. This process poses a substantially higher risk to the integrity of potable water tables.

There was a second hearing in the lawsuit of Jessica Ernst against ERCB, Alberta Environment and Encana on January 18th. Before the hearing, the ERCB had been saying that it has no duty to care! Jessica, who is a scientist, has been documenting everything that has happened – before and after her well was fouled with methane – because Encana often fracked oil and gas wells above the water table in her Rosebud neighbourhood.

Jessica tried to communicate with Alberta Environment and the ERCB about the mishaps. After a first response that the methane contamination was due to a failure in her own well's integrity, she was repeatedly ignored to the point that all her written complaints were returned unopened to her. Klippenstein, the Toronto law firm representing Jessica, based their claim against the ERCB and Alberta Environment on the fact that a government institution knowingly ignored a complaint of ground water contamination. The firm argues that by persistently returning Jessica's written alerts unopened in large brown envelopes to her, the ERCB and Alberta Environment fundamentally violated Canada's Charter of Rights. Instead of acting as an enforcer of protective measures in the public interest, Alberta's regulator, the ERCB, has become a facilitator for companies doing the fracking.

Jessica's case is so well-documented and clear that it will be interesting to see how the Alberta government and Encana can twist themselves out of this pickle. What they will do is prolong the process as long as possible to exhaust Jessica's funds and stamina. The NFU will follow this case, and we ask members to support Jessica where they can, as it is vital to the process of setting and enforcing proper regulation of the energy sector.

The national convention passed a resolution stating that the NFU lobby for implementation of the following recommendations to address the risk

(continued on page 12...)



(Region 7 Report, from page 11)

of contaminating groundwater with hydraulic fracturing:

- 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.

The NFU is currently preparing and will soon submit a brief to the ERCB requesting the measures listed above be included in standard regulations.

Alberta laws affect land owners

In a seminar at the University of Alberta in Camrose last November, the NFU described how land-owners have been affected by several Alberta laws (Bills 46, 19, 50, 24, 10 and 2) that have come into effect within the last 5 years. A similar address has been requested for an NDP event in March, also in Camrose.

Liberal leadership race

NFU members from Wetaskiwin and Picture Butte have received a fact sheet, to be used in defense of supply management at meetings where federal Liberal leadership candidates are speaking or consulting. Candidate Martha Hall Findley, in particular, has been beating the drum to eliminate supply management because food is too expensive for low income Canadians.

It is puzzling to say the least that while Harper viciously attacks our democratic processes, opposition members vying to fix less important things have their heads buried firmly in the sand.

Idle No More

Several national, provincial and local civil society groups have come together to act in response to the Harper government's attack on democracy. The coalition, called Common Causes, joins with the First Nations peoples' uprising.

The NFU Region 7 was invited, on rather short notice, to participate in a press conference on January 28 in Edmonton, Alberta, followed by public events in Winston Churchill Square. Unfortunately, we could not be represented at that event. But we have officially joined the peoples' movement in Alberta and will participate in future events. Members, please participate and share information!

Obituary

Floyd Van Slyke from Red Deer passed away in January. He was a long-term, dedicated NFU member and worked diligently for the orderly marketing of grain and chicken. He served as president of the Chicken Board in the seventies and eighties.

Floyd being a poet, will be missed by family, friends and beyond, as his friendly, gentle touch of life was an inspiration for all.

In Solidarity, Jan Slomp



Around the World:

News from the International Program Committee

La Via Campesina's (LVC) International Commissions and campaigns are driven by committed farmers and activists worldwide. For the past few years, three NFU members have represented the North American region on LVC Commissions for which the NFU is responsible: Kalissa Regier (Region 6) on the Youth Commission, Colleen Ross (Region 3) on the Biodiversity Commission, and Karen Pedersen (Region 6) on the Women's Commission. Former NFU president Nettie Wiebe (Region 6) also acted as a substitute to the North American woman on the LVC International Coordination Committee.

The Civil Society Mechanism, Rome

With several seats on the Coordination Committee of the International Food Security and Nutrition Civil Society Mechanism (CSM), LVC is able to prepare joint political positions and interventions on food and agriculture policy issues as well as develop lobbying strategies to use at the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS). Kalissa Regier, NFU member and organic farmer in Saskatchewan, is currently one of La Via Campesina's representatives on the Civil Society Mechanism.

Despite international lobbying efforts, the government of Canada has shown little support to civil society at the CFS. LVC and other grassroots social movements however, are receiving tremendous support from many African countries and the European Union, with the aim to develop food and agriculture policies that combat the current domination by transnationals and focus on local solutions to hunger and poverty.

Youth Processes under Development in La Via Campesina

- by Blain Snipstal, Rural Coalition

Since 2008, La Via Campesina - North America (Mexico, U.S. and Canada) has been developing its youth process. In 2008 at the last International and Regional meetings, the NFU and NFFC (National Family Farm Coalition - US) were elected to drive the youth process in the region. Kalissa Regier of the NFU, along with Bob St. Peter of the NFFC, took the lead and began organizing workshops, giving presentations and ultimately supporting the last Regional Youth Encounter in Mexico in 2009. Kalissa represented North American Youth at several international youth encounters, including the LVC International Youth Encounter in Maputo in 2009. She was also key in constructing the LVC Youth Campaign - "The Youth of LVC are Fighting" and in the general leadership within the LVC Youth Commission.

In September of 2012, regional and international youth meetings in Mexico defined five themes for the upcoming LVC International Youth Assembly: Food Sovereignty, Climate Change and Agroecology, Migration and Access to Land and Health. The Assembly will take place next June just before the 6th LVC Global conference in Jakarta, Indonesia.



Photo: NFU Vice President Colleen Ross and the international participants of the LVC Biodiversity Commission who gathered in Paris, October 2012, to discuss international seeds issues and strategies.

(continued on page 14...)

Seeds: the Root of Power

LVC Biodiversity Commission Seeds Meeting in Paris, France, October 2012

NFU Vice President Colleen Ross, North America Regional representative of LVC International Biodiversity Commission (IBC) attended this meeting, which had been called because of a new and heightened attack on seeds. Countries are being pressured to accede to UPOV '91. Climate change and the increasing need for biodiversity in agricultural systems are urgent issues that must be addressed.

Seed banks generated a great deal of discussion. The IBC, along with trusted and informed allies such as GRAIN and ETC Group, met to discuss our collective strategies to protect farmers' rights to seed. Although seed libraries and seed banks were recognized as playing an increasingly important role in protecting landraces, there was a shared concern that these seed banks will become seed "tombs" all too quickly. We agreed that it is important to 'set the seeds free' so that farmers can not only cultivate precious and rare varieties, as well as multiply and distribute them more widely. This is not to detract from the importance of seed banks, but to acknowledge that there must be a balance between saving heritage varieties and using them in-situ, so that seed stocks may continue to adapt to ever-changing climate and soil conditions.

Concerns about UPOV (International Convention for the Protection of New Varieties of

Plants) were discussed at length. Countries not yet signatories to UPOV '91 are under pressure to accede to its principles, and countries that have not yet acceded to UPOV '91 are being forced to do so – and it is not only through trade agreements that such pressure is exerted. LVC member organizations agreed that UPOV should be repealed altogether and that an LVC international seed campaign must educate farmers about seed law and their rights as farmers.

The LVC's internal seed campaign has helped meet education needs and expand seed exchanges while at the same time recovering lost seed varieties. LVC has campaigned to protect farmer rights and seeds for over 10 years. Our next step is to support ongoing local seed exchanges to strengthen the practices of seed exchanges and fairs, and provide training about seed-saving and propagation. At the same time, LVC continues to oppose corporate takeover of seeds.

UPOV is globalized regulatory framework also called the "Monsanto Laws" that allows ag biotech firms experimentation rights that supersede nationally legislated barriers against GMOs. Immediate political action is critical to denounce both UPOV '91 and the promotion of the so-called "Monsanto Laws". The NFU has successfully prevented the implementation of UPOV '91 in Canada, and will continue to do so.

LVC Meetings in Mexico

Colleen Ross, Kalissa Regier and Karen Pedersen attended a series of La Via Campesina meetings in Mexico City from September 22 to October 3, 2012. Kalissa attended youth meetings, while Karen attended women's meetings. Karen took part in the Migration Seminar, and Colleen was involved in an International Seminar on Public Policies for Food Sovereignty. All three participated in the North America regional meeting.

Migration Seminar

Globally, migrants face increasing criminalization and exploitation, coupled with eroding protective legal mechanisms. Today, both migration and repression are intensifying, and the effects are most visible as borders are militarized to prevent people from migrating. At the same time, however, Canadians assist in the commoditization of migrant labour through the 'guest workers' system. Considered cheap and disposable, migrants are becoming the cornerstone of the international food system.

Participants highlighted the need to bring human rights, tied to food, back into migration and development issues. Given the scale of forced or exploitative migration patterns in the current global food system, migration is an increasingly important focus of *La Via Campesina*. The seminar recommended that each organization designate at least one person to work on immigration/migration issues. Colleen Ross, Karen Pedersen and Reg Phelan of the International Program Committee will act as liaisons between LVC and the NFU on the issue. NFU members interested in migration can contact any of the three for more information.

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Still fighting for equality

Highlights of the Women's International Commission meeting

- by Karen Pedersen

The International Women's Commission in Mexico featured several discussions, but to keep this report brief, I will speak about three subjects.

The first discussion I will highlight was whether to use the word "feminist" or "feminism" in the title of the upcoming Women's Commission Meeting at La Via Campesina's 6th Conference in Jakarta. The issue has not yet been resolved.

This circumstance points to a particularly important lesson for all of us. The messaging machine of the corporate capitalist agenda is incredibly powerful. They restrain social movements by demonizing words so we spend time justifying and defending those words rather than working against the corporate agenda. Their repetitive messages actually *change* the frame of the conversation. Some examples of demonized words are feminist, peasant and taxes. What we need to learn is that when we believe their messaging, stop using our own words and start to use theirs, we become part of their message machine - forwarding their messages and therefore, their agenda. In Canada for example, the word "tax" has been so demonized that now all conversation about taxes is framed as "tax cuts" rather than "equality". Every time we say "tax cut", we cede ground because we are participating in their framing of the conversation.

So, a feminist is someone who works for women's equality. A peasant is a small farmer.

Taxes are the tool that governments use to pay for services and achieve a more equal society. I am proud to be a feminist peasant who believes that through progressive taxation we will achieve equality. I will not cede ground by being afraid to use my language.

The second point I want to highlight is that the women of the LVC went on strike during one of the Mexico meetings. The Women's Commission met and agreed to this action because women were asked to fill support roles at one meeting – **but** only two women were invited to speak. The men were upset because they thought the women should have fixed the agenda before actually arriving in Mexico. This made me mad and I saw red. It's not just women's job to attend to gender issues. It belongs to everyone – especially to men. The fight for women's equality is at least a century old, and men shouldn't have to be continually taught or reminded of their responsibility on this front. The women's reaction was predictable. Men played with fire and they got burned.

The final issue I will report here is the Campaign to End Violence Against Women – a key action of the Women's Commission. Its importance is highlighted by the murder of Maria Do Fetal de Almeida, an LVC volunteer from Brazil by her partner in January 2013. It happens everywhere, regardless of culture, class or ethnicity.



Photo (Flags):

All La Via Campesina meetings start and end with a mística. Místicas use powerful symbols, such as seeds, soil, water and fire to create theatrical ceremonies that tie participants from diverse linguistic, religious and cultural backgrounds to the unifying experiences, struggles and hope that all share and value within LVC.

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Seminar on Public Policies for Food Sovereignty

Since La Via Campesina asserted in 1996 at the World Food Summit in Rome that food sovereignty is the model that can best provide socio-economic justice within our food systems, farmers' organizations have been promoting it in various ways. Some have successfully pressured their governments to incorporate food sovereignty into their constitutions (Ecuador, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Venezuela, Nepal, etc). At the local level, communities (e.g. the US) have come together to demand municipal food sovereignty legislation. Other countries have passed constitutional amendments that include the Right to Food (e.g. Mexico, Brazil, etc). *But concretely, what public policies do we need, at the local, national, regional and international levels, to protect and promote food sovereignty?*

Women - We cannot over-emphasize the crucial role of women in farming – not only in the operations that lie at the heart of food sovereignty, such as seed saving, but at every stage in the food system – from crop production to distribution. Laws and policies are urgently needed to guarantee women's personal safety and their equal rights to access and possess land, access credit, etc.

Land, Territory, Biodiversity and Water - There is a crying need worldwide for regulations that protect the use of our commons; water, land, seeds and biodiversity. Thanks to the Idle No Movement, Harper's outrageous policies on environmental protection and land use have been highly criticized. But more pressure is needed to ensure the protection, access and control over resources for the stewards of our lands as well as our food producers – especially the new, young men and women farmers who want to farm.

Productive Process, Seeds and Credit, Agroecology - Public policies that ensure farmers' seed sovereignty are critical. The group highlighted the necessity to put seed certification processes under farmers' control. Moreover, countries such as Mexico need public policies to develop infrastructure and provide access to credit to improve its productivity. Finally, agroecology - the counter-proposal to agribusiness – should be supported, promoted and further studied.

Markets, food systems, prices, local markets, added value, commercialization, corporations - Public policies are in large part, dictated by the imperatives of the global market economy advocated by international institutions such as the WTO, IMF and the WB. The priority instead should be the right to food above profit – to use basic human needs as the basis for producing goods and services. One step toward this goal would be to take agriculture out of free trade agreements and the WTO. This would allow countries to develop public policies to encourage and facilitate the implementation of farmer-friendly agencies and structures such as supply management, single desk selling, shorter food chains, local markets and supply co-operatives, while also ensuring labour rights.

Agroecology: Feeding the world

- by Stephanie Wang

La Via Campesina held its first global encounter on Agroecology and Peasant Seeds in Thailand in November 2012. As the new IPC Coordinator, I was invited to join the meeting to support the synthesis team. I was impressed to hear how agroecology schools are more than purely technical training centres. They are the educational, political and organizational nerve centres of the farmers' movement. The schools and their local communities catalyze the political struggle while dealing with the practical implementation of alternative farming systems.

Agroecology is about building autonomy based on local resources, knowledge and capacity. Building from general principles, agroecology methods and techniques are as diverse as the climates, cultures and socio-political contexts in which communities evolve. Agroecological models are being 'remembered' and implemented by Asian, African and Latin American peasants. In Canada and the United States, we still need to experiment, recover traditional knowledge and innovate to develop agroecological models suitable to our climate, labour, market, soil and farm conditions. Only then will agroecological models become truly accessible, profitable and sustainable farming alternatives.

In short, agroecology is the key to achieving food sovereignty. But without food sovereignty, the scope for agroecology as a collective process for social transformation remains limited. As Haesook Kim¹ brilliantly put it: "*Without food sovereignty, agroecology is only a technology; without agroecology, food sovereignty is only a slogan*".

¹ LVC Regional secretary for East and Southeast Asia



Farmer's Privilege and UPOV '91

—by Terry Boehm

In the ongoing debate about Plant Breeders' Rights and how it will affect farmers, perhaps the most controversial area is the issue of "Farmer's Privilege". Canada currently has plant breeders' rights legislation which is patterned on an international convention known as UPOV (Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants) '78. There is a move by government and pressure by the Canadian Seed Trade Association, seed companies, and the Grain Growers of Canada to change our legislation to the much more restrictive UPOV '91 version of plant breeders' rights. It is being sold to farmers and to the public that this is required for Canada to have access to improved and innovative varieties and that it enshrines "farmer's privilege" which would allow farmers to save and reuse seed.

On the surface, this sounds good and proponents of UPOV '91 would like the debate to stop there. However, as with most things, when one understands the details, "farmer's privilege" is at best a temporary reprieve and in reality a means to a very miserable end.

Farmers cannot imagine being denied the ability to save, reuse, exchange or sell seeds to a neighbor and plant a crop with the harvest being theirs and theirs alone. UPOV '91 wants to change all of that. This change will happen through breeders' rights which will trump farmer's privilege every time or make it so expensive farmers will not bother to save seeds any longer. The first right plant breeders will have is the so-called cascading right. This right gives plant breeders the ability to collect royalties beyond the seed itself to harvested material (crops) and even processed products. This would mean that if the farmer had used a protected variety, royalties could be collected at any time including when he sells his crop. No one is defining how high the royalties would be and what would be done with them. It is not clear if the farmer would be responsible for the royalties for just the seed it took to produce that crop or for the whole crop. These things are conveniently undefined and would be left for the courts to determine. The object is to make farm-saved seed uneconomic when its use can trigger royalties.

The next right is the ability for breeders to control the conditioning (cleaning, treating etc.), stocking (storing), sale, import, and export of seed. This is where it gets particularly thorny. If a farmer cannot get his seed cleaned, he will not plant it. If he cannot store grain for the purpose of seeding, how can he exercise his so-called privilege? Under our present act, the breeder has the exclusive right to sell seeds of their variety but no right to control cleaning and storing. In UPOV '91 the burden of proof shifts to the farmer to prove variety. For example, the farmer would have to prove he did *not* have company "X's" variety in any dispute. Threats of court action will cause farmers to try to avoid this dilemma by purchasing pedigreed seed to prove variety. The fact is that most canola farmers in western Canada purchase seed on an annual basis at very high prices in no small part to avoid litigation.

As control extends, an increasingly concentrated seed industry will use contracts prohibiting farm-saved seed as a stipulation to accessing new varieties. These are transitional measures which will facilitate the final control of seed, agriculture, food and ultimately the choices we will have. It should be noted that the federal government is withdrawing from variety development to leave this completely in private hands with all future varieties if UPOV '91 comes into force, having plant breeders' rights and the possibility of double protection including patents would be allowed. UPOV '91 would extend the term of plant breeders' rights to 20 years or longer. Seed and agriculture are too important to let a few transnational companies own and control. If farmers do not want to become serfs, they need to fight this with all of their energy.

Canada has no obligation under international trade agreements or treaties to move to this legislation. The choice the government of Canada is giving us is to pay high prices to rent private seed while at the same time withdrawing from public varietal development. Plant breeders' rights and identity preservation contracts with small premiums at first are the tools to entice farmers to final enslavement through closed loop contracts. Slaves worked for nothing. Farmers of today and the future will pay for that enslavement. Perhaps this is what "Farmer's Privilege" really means. —ntu—



GM Alfalfa in Canada: Update on “unconfined release status”

-by Katherine Rothermel, NFU Member, Local 316

NFU Region 3 (Ontario) held its Fall Convention Nov 27th in Stratford, home of the internationally acclaimed Shakespeare Festival. The city of 30,000 is surrounded by some of the finest farmland in Canada. Our guest speakers were Dr. Rene Van Acker from the University of Guelph, Department of Plant Agriculture, and Phil Woodhouse, President of Local 344, Grey County.

Dr. Van Acker's research interests include weed biology and ecology, robust cropping systems, multifunctional agriculture and the co-existence of GM and non-GM crops. He testified in the Schmeiser vs Monsanto case in 1998, and personally concluded that this case was not about agronomy but instead about power, control and inadequate legislation.

What Monsanto Wants

GM alfalfa has been granted “unconfined release status” in Canada. Phil Woodhouse, an organic farmer from Grey County, spoke about the Canadian Seed Trade Association's Co-existence Workshop in Kitchener on Oct 24. Grey County, incidentally, is the largest hay-producing area in Ontario, but 85% of the alfalfa is grown with grass in mixed stands.

Forage Genetics International (FGI), the company bringing the seed to market, and Monsanto, owner of the genetic traits, want to sell this new product to farmers who grow clean stands of alfalfa, and are mainly targeting dairy farmers. The companies are also developing a GM alfalfa variety with low-fibre at mid-bloom and the quality usually associated with bud stage. To facilitate uptake of their product, FGI and Monsanto have offered to establish co-existence guidelines using space and time buffers (i.e. cut stands before flowering). Designated growing regions for GM have also been proposed. They also want acceptance of low-level thresholds of contamination with segregated markets. Low level presence (LLP) would permit a bulk load with a tenth of a per cent GM presence to be treated as if it were uncontaminated. If it is passed, Canada would be the first country to allow LLP, but the government intends to persuade trading partners to enact similar legislation and thus allow importation of contaminated grains.

Why Farmers Should Not Grow GM Alfalfa

Organic flax with .01% GM contamination was rejected by Europe. Why would it be any different for alfalfa? The Schmeiser case demonstrated that possession of patented seed is grounds for legal action with no consideration of proportionality. Monsanto only has to show that some seeds or plants in a crop contain their patented gene to evoke patent rights. As Dr. Van Acker pointed out, the law should in fact consider the proportion of patented seed in the field. There is no advantage to a farmer to have a field with a small portion of GM seed, and there is no way to know which seeds or plants are GM and which are not. If the mixed-seed field was grown out and sprayed with glyphosate, most of the crop would die. Small percentages of GMOs found in seeds or fields should be treated in law as genetic pollution.

Dr. Van Acker also pointed out that Monsanto has no liability for future interpretations of harm from their products. Growing evidence suggests that glyphosate is being overused, that it affects animal and soil health, and contaminates ground water.

In a discussion following the presentations, the Chair asked attendees for ideas about how to fight the sale of GM alfalfa. Suggestions included the following:

- Support for public plant-breeding programs;
- Support for legislation that punishes genetic polluters;
- Form alliances with consumers, CFFO, First Nations, faith groups, beekeepers, seed companies, chefs, Quebec dairy farmers, or anyone else who may be held liable in the future for the deleterious effects of GM crops;
- Support long-term studies of the effects of eating GMOs; and
- Work with cities, regions and municipalities to declare GM-free zones similar to what Salt Spring Island and in Richmond City have in place.

Dr. Van Acker's most disturbing comment was that all escapes from “regulated events” were caused by human error. **There is no way to stop GMO contamination once it is released.** Let's work together to continue to raise awareness among farm and city communities of the danger of long-term effects from using GM crops.

—nfu—



The Story of Northumberland

—by Cathleen Kneen

This year the Northumberland Lamb Marketing Co-operative (“Northumberland”) celebrated 30 years of serving the sheep farmers of Nova Scotia. For a small farmer-run co-op, that is quite an achievement. What made it successful? Or, to put it another way, how can its basic principles of Trust, Respect, and Integrity be replicated in other circumstances?

In the late 1970s in Nova Scotia, things were changing for sheep farmers. Sheep had been very much a side-line for most farmers, getting little attention and consequently little return. The price of wool barely covered the cost of shearing. Some lambs were sold directly to private customers, but that market was limited by the memories of war vets who had been fed rations of Australian mutton overseas and could not abide the smell of lamb cooking. Most lambs were picked up cheaply in the fall by travelling “drovers” and sold to buyers in Montreal.

This began to change with the appearance of new farmers who saw sheep farming as a respectable occupation; a new fashion for all things natural which raised the profile of wool craft; and a younger generation of professionals interested in high-quality foods, including local lamb. In 1973, we organized the first annual Nova Scotia Sheep Fair which raised the profile of sheep farming (and our spirits) and encouraged deeper conversations about the sheep business, including the problem of marketing.

One step was to collaborate with a co-op in New Brunswick to truck lambs to Montreal, by-passing the middlemen. This was nice because we knew the price for the carcass before we sent the lambs off, and it gave us some experience in working together. But we could see that Quebec was pursuing a food sovereignty policy so that market would soon dry up. We needed to develop a wholesale market for lamb in Nova Scotia.

Marketing trials in Halifax made it clear that there would be a robust market for high-quality lamb, but none of the supermarkets seemed to be interested in buying on a regular basis. Then Brewster (as Secretary of the Sheep Producers Association) got a call from Ron Young, head meat buyer for Sobeys’ stores and a butcher from the UK who understood and appreciated lamb. At the time, Sobeys was a local chain headed by

Frank Sobey, and Frank wanted local lamb in his stores. If Brewster could figure out how to get local lamb to the Sobeys stores every week of the year, Ron would work with him to develop a system to set fair prices over the year, reflecting changing seasonal costs of production and international markets. Brewster got Michael Isenor, one of the small flock-owners who was selling to private customers and sometimes to grocery stores, to agree to take on deliveries to the stores (and relationships with the meat managers) if Brewster would organize the farmers.

Now sheep farmers are notorious for being individualistic. However, with our marketing trials we had developed a group of farmers (including most of the larger flocks in the province) who frequently got together to share stories, food, and home-brew. They agreed to form a co-op, and began to meet in each others’ barns to learn how to produce a good carcass lamb year-round. We started using different breeds of sheep to lamb “out-of-season”, and learning management skills such as ‘condition scoring’ for pregnant ewes, assessing the ‘finish’ on a market lamb – and particularly how to feed lambs to achieve the desired weights at the desired time.

In the process, we transformed the whole Nova Scotia sheep business from one end to the other. We developed a level of trust within the Co-op which meant that if the orders were down one week, farmers would agree to hold their lambs back, knowing that the price per pound might be lower the following week, but would balance out with the weight gain.

From the beginning, the Co-op was set up so that all proceeds beyond wages and maintenance went back to the farmer-shippers in the price paid for their lambs. The Co-op could not become wealthy in and of itself, and when we needed something, like a second-hand refrigerator truck to do our first deliveries, everyone pitched in. This has now been formalized with ‘pool’ of capital for necessary improvements made up of a small percentage of each farmer’s cheque which goes into an account in his or her name. A farmer who leaves the Co-op can withdraw these funds without jeopardizing the Co-op as might happen if they withdrew substantial share capital.

(continued on page 20...)





Photo: Brewster Kneen (L) and Micheal Isenor, Manager (R), are co-founders of the Northumberland farmers' Co-op. Northumberland's refrigerated delivery truck ensures that the co-op can safely deliver fresh lamb year-round to Nova Scotia retailers and restaurants.

In the same spirit, the Co-op was set up to serve the farmers who ship through the Co-op. There is no extra dividend or payment to those who are members. The only advantage of membership is that you get to go to meetings and help direct the affairs of the Co-op. This is very different from other co-ops, for example the large dairy co-ops or the Prairie grain pools, which are owned by their members but run by managers who operate just like any other capitalist business, striving to maximize profit and increase the wealth of the co-op and its owners.

Trust, integrity, and respect were and remain the watchwords throughout the operation, from the moment in 1983 when we needed a down-payment of \$5,000 to seal our purchase of Brookside Abattoir and got a one-year, interest-free loan from Frank Sobey – on a handshake; to Michael's insistence that despite continuing efforts by all the supermarkets to have us deliver to their central warehouses, Northumberland would only deliver direct to the stores – the only way to ensure the quality which is our sole advantage; to Ron Young's lecturing his meat managers that if they did not buy consistently from the Co-op, and took advantage of opportunities to buy 'cheaper' lamb, "these guys won't be there when you need them"; to the follow-up phone call to a farmer who had delivered a sub-standard lamb to the abattoir – only to discover that the man's wife had cancer, and then to contact his neighbours to alert them to the need for support.

A unique history? Of course. But not irrelevant as we seek to challenge the dominant paradigm of individualism and greed.

—nfu—

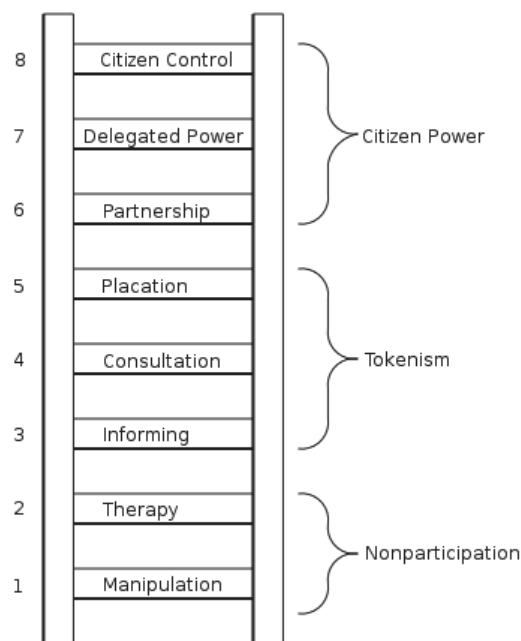
Brewster and Cathleen Kneen ran a commercial sheep farm in northern Nova Scotia from 1971 to 1986. They continue to publish The Ram's Horn, a monthly newsletter of food system analysis (www.ramshorn.ca).

(Message from the Editor, from page 2)

This sounds much too familiar, doesn't it? We want power; governments and other power-holders want as little participation as possible. We used to rail against governments that consulted with us at the level of tokenism: 'consultations' that were at best placatory but which more frequently simply informed us what had been decided in our best interests. They, of course, knew better what we needed than we did.

Those were the good old days. Today, we've actually fallen or been pushed right off the ladder. Farmers and others critical of Canada's current policy directions don't even rate manipulation; we are simply ignored. The Harper government consults with its corporate cronies, buries significant legislative changes in 400-page omnibus bills and dictates to the rest of us what will be. And what will be is not what most of us want. We don't want corporations to have the right to sue our governments for lost revenue because of legislative changes made in the best interests of Canadians. We don't want to see Canadian jobs that pay well and have good benefits exported to countries with lower labour costs and poor worker protections. We want the top of the ladder: at least partnership and delegated power, if not citizen control. We want a citizen's Canada, not a corporate Canada.

—nfu—



Omnibus Bills, Idle No More and the NFU:

Our Common Land, Our Common Ground

With a January 15 media release, we made public our support for the Idle No More movement, saying “The NFU is proud to declare its solidarity with Idle No More, which is bringing people together from across Canada to stop the Harper government from riding roughshod over our collective rights. We want a better Canada.”

The common ground that Idle No More and the NFU share is literal; our common ground is the land. It is also our demand that the government uphold its responsibilities to respect the rule of law, and to consult with us on matters that are vital to our survival and wellbeing.

The Idle No More movement began in Saskatoon with a small group of women who saw the danger of Bill C-45 and decided to educate themselves and members of the community about its threats. They started by organizing a teach-in on November 10 at a local community centre. In the following weeks, more teach-ins, rallies, ceremonies and round dances were organized as people learned what was at stake and felt the urgency to share the news and make their opposition to C-45 visible. According to co-founder Sylvia McAdam, under Canadian law silence is considered to be consent and Bill C-45 is an attempt to silence us.

Bill C-45 amends the Indian Act to make it possible for reserve land to be turned over to the federal government to be leased without the consent of the band. In effect, Bill C-45 provides a method of privatizing the use of land that was set apart for “use and benefit in common” by the band when the Treaties were made.

In our statement, the NFU also calls for the federal government to fulfill its Constitutional duty to consult and accommodate Aboriginal and Treaty rights, and urges the Crown to respect and fulfill the obligations of its Treaties with First Nations. A significant body of law has established the duty to consult, what constitutes legitimate consultation, and that such consultation cannot

be offloaded onto third parties. It clearly sets out that the federal government does not have the authority to act unilaterally when it comes to matters that affect traditional territories of First Nations or their social and cultural well-being.

In addition to changing the *Indian Act*, Bill C-45 has fundamentally and unilaterally changed the *Navigable Waters Protection Act*, which used to protect all of Canada’s lakes, rivers and streams. The Act is now called the *Navigation Protection Act*, and it only protects the bodies of water (3 oceans, 97 lakes and 62 rivers) that are on a list that can be changed by a Cabinet order, without debate in Parliament. The protection of even these waters is limited, as the Minister may declare a water body or any part of it, and/or “works” on it to be “minor” and thus exempt from regulation.

Bill C-38, which was passed in June 2012, fundamentally changed the *Fisheries Act*. It made it the destruction of fish by any means legal in general, unless the fish are part of a commercial or Aboriginal fishery. It eliminated fish habitat protection altogether, and allows the federal government to delegate to third parties (i.e. private interests), the right to apply what little regulatory authority remains.

Other unilateral actions taken by this government affect farmers more specifically. Bill C-38 changed the *Seeds Act* so that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency can now delegate to third parties its regulatory power regarding sampling, testing, grading or labelling of seeds for quality control or assurance of seeds or seed crops. Private seed companies given this power will be able to use it to discipline their customers and suppliers. Bill C-18 destroyed the Canadian Wheat Board’s single desk in defiance of the then-existing law’s requirement that a farmer vote be held before significant changes were introduced. In addition to ending the single desk, Bill C-18 declared every flour mill, feed mill, feed warehouse and seed cleaning mill to be “works in the general interest of Canada”, thus placing them under federal

(continued on page 22...)



We Remember ...

DOLORES MAE SHADD



DOLORES SHADD, of Merlin, Ontario, passed away Thursday, January 31, 2013 at the age of 87 at Blenheim Community Village nursing home.

Dolores was the daughter of the late Albert and Edna Hurst. She was predeceased by her husband Edwin Shadd in 2011. Dolores was loving mother of Duane and Ruth Shadd of Kitchener, Ontario; Terence and Sandy Shadd of Merlin, Ontario; and Darrell and Mary Shadd of Shrewsbury, Ontario. She was dear grandmother of Crystal Shadd-Ceres and husband Kurt, Shaun and Melissa Shadd, Kenen and Christine Shadd all of Kitchener; and great-grandmother of Trinity, Jeremiah, Zion, and Miabella. Dolores was dear sister of Ila Roszier. Dolores is predeceased by sister Jean Mitchell.

Dolores was past chair of the Board of Directors and 1990 inductee to the Kent Agricultural Hall of Fame. She was a member of the National Farmers Union and Life member of the Associated Country Women of the World. Dolores was also a life member of the YMCA and the first member to receive the International Medallion for Peace.

(Omnibus Bills, Idle No More and the NFU, from page 21)

regulatory jurisdiction. This power-grab is no doubt related to the government's plan to adopt the UPOV '91 Plant Breeders' Rights regime which will increase corporate control over seeds. Bill C-45 has also eliminated Canadian Grain Commission's inward inspection requirement, making it possible for grain companies to cheat farmers by manipulating grades and measures between the purchase point at the country elevator and the destination at port.

The common threads that tie these pieces of legislation together are that they privatize power and control over our commons – whether it is:

- leasing without members' consent the land held in common by First Nations bands in the form of reserves;
- environmental protection of crown land and waters held in common by Canada, which the Federal Government has abandoned, thereby allowing oil and gas and mining corporations to use them at will;

- the CWB, the marketing agency built by and for farmers for their common benefit, stripped of its legislated authority and made ready to sell to the private grain trade; or
- the commonwealth of seed, created and stewarded by countless generations of farmers that is being handed over to the multinational agri-business corporations.

The Idle No More vision is about working together as allies in grassroots movements to pursue sovereignty, environmental protection and to ensure that the Treaties between Canada and First Nations are respected. The first Idle No More teach-in sparked a movement that is inspiring the world and bringing together people from all parts of Canada — rural, urban, First Nations, immigrants and the descendents of immigrants — in common cause to reclaim our country and rebuild it according to a vision of justice, dignity and inclusion.

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*We Remember ...***SCOTT MACARTHUR – A GREAT LEGACY****1932-2012***A Tribute by Urban Laughlin*

Scott and I met at the 1948 Maritime Winter Fair, competing for the right to represent P.E.I. 4-H at the Royal Winter Fair's National 4-H Club Week. Scott, a long-time dairy farmer along with his wife Kay, was a valued member of the Holstein Club and continued to enjoy many trips to the Royal Winter Fair in Toronto.

Scott and Kay founded the Queens County NFU Local 104 in February 1969, and attended the NFU's Founding Convention on July 30 and 31, 1969 in Winnipeg. In February 1970, the three NFU locals then constituted formed NFU District 1, Region 1 (PEI). At our first District Board meeting on February 25, 1970, we hired Scott MacArthur as NFU Treasurer. He retired from that position 40 years later in June 2010. As Treasurer, Scott signed many cheques for NFU petroleum and fertilizer rebate programs, and his was the only signature on those cheques.

Scott was a loyal and humble man who said grace at many functions over the years. In 2009, he declined to be nominated for a possible induction into the Atlantic Agricultural Hall of Fame. A few years ago, Scott and Kay won the NFU Grass Roots Award for NFU Region 1 (Maritimes).

Scott realized that people can have much financial wealth, but friends are a person's greatest treasure. We were certainly blessed to have Scott MacArthur in this realm. Mary and I last visited Scott at the Atlantic Baptist Nursing Home about two weeks before his passing on December 24, 2012. We, and all members of the NFU community, extend our sympathy to Kay MacArthur and the family.

**EDWIN MORDEN**

The progressive farm movement and the farmers union has lost a stalwart. Ed Morden, a tireless leader, known for his wit, his humour, his judgment and courage, passed away on January 22 of this year.

Ed was born and raised in the Shelburn area where he and his wife farmed for many years. He became a member of the Ontario Farmers Union in the early 1950's, and worked as an organizer and the treasurer for the union out of the Guelph office.

Ed had countless friends in the farm community throughout Ontario and the rest of Canada. He worked tirelessly to help farmers work together to assure their proper place in Canadian society, both socially and economically. He was known wherever farmers and their families struggled for justice. Our memory of Ed should inspire all of us to continue the struggle.



NFU BOARD MEMBERS AND OFFICES

Regional Offices:

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

Financial Services: 120 Bishop Dr., Summerside, PEI C1N 5Z8 Ph: (902) 436-1872

Region 3: 5420 Hwy. 6 N, RR 5, Guelph, ON K1H 6J2 Ph: in ON 1-888-832-9638 / Ph: outside ON (705) 738-3993

Region 5: Newdale Shopping Centre, Rm 209, 2989 Pembina Hwy., Winnipeg, MB R3T 2H5 Ph: (204) 261-0500

Region 6: 2717 Wentz Avenue, Saskatoon, SK S7K 4B6 Ph: (306) 652-9465

National Officers and Directors:

Terry Boehm, President, Allan, SK; *Colleen Ross*, 1st Vice President (Policy), Nelson, BC; *Paul Slomp*, 2nd Vice President (Operations), Ottawa, ON; *Joan Brady*, Women's President, Spring Bay, ON; *Kathleen Charpentier*, Women's Vice President, Castor, AB; *Cammie Harbottle*, Youth President, Tatamagouche, NS; *Alex Fletcher*, Youth Vice President, Victoria, BC; *Randall Affleck*, Region 1 Coordinator, Bedeque, PE; *Betty Brown*, Region 1 Board Member, Summerfield, NB; *Ann Slater*, Region 3 Coordinator, Lakeside, ON; *Coral Sproule*, Region 3 Board Member, Perth, ON; *Ian Robson*, Region 5 Coordinator, Deleau, MB; *Bev Stow*, Region 5 Board Member, Carman, MB; *Ed Sagan*, Region 6 Coordinator, Melville, SK; *Glenn Tait*, Region 6 Board Member, Meota, SK; *Matt Gehl*, Region 6 Board Member, Regina, SK; *Jan Slomp*, Region 7 Coordinator, Rimbey, AB; *Doug Scott*, Region 7 Board Member, Waskatenau, AB; *Peter Eggers*, Region 8 Coordinator, La Glace, AB; *Dan Ferguson*, Region 8 Board Member, Duncan, BC.

Women's Advisory Committee: *Marion Drummond*, Freetown, PE; *Karen Eatwell*, Denfield, ON; *Kate Storey*, Grandview, MB; *Marcella Pedersen*, Cut Knife, SK; *Donna Freadrich*, Forestburg, AB.

Youth Advisory Committee: *Farrah Carter*, Sackville, NB; *Ken Mills*, Granton, ON; *Dean Harder*, Winnipeg, MB; *Blake Hall*, Castor, AB; *Lisa Lundgard*, Grimshaw, AB.

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.
- 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: 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.