

THE
union farmer

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Photo: NFU members attended the 44th Annual National Convention of the National Farmers Union in Ottawa, Ontario, November 27th to 30th, 2013.

(left to right): Christina Magill, Roxanne Dubois from Unifor (standing), Michelle Melnyk, Maureen Parker, Josh Coles, Jackie Affleck and Cory Ollikka.

Message from the Editor...



Editor: Carla Roppel

This will be a short message, because I want to leave as much space as possible to share summaries of the presentations we were privy to at our 44th Annual National Convention in Ottawa. Members and visitors had a great time

meeting the many new faces in attendance – young faces belonging to people with a passion for food and for building a better farming and food system. We learned, shared stories, wrote, amended and debated resolutions, sometimes on the convention floor, sometimes over a coffee or a drink (or three), laughed, ate and danced.

That said, however, it would be hard to ignore the fact that that the Ritz crew is set to hand a whole new crop of gifts over to the corporate sector with Bill C-18, the ‘Agriculture Omnibus’ bill. This piece of ... legislation ... puts the finishing touches on Ritz’s legacy to Canadian farmers, proposing amendments to seven pieces of legislation that will further limit farmers’ choices and autonomy while increasing costs and reducing income.

This legislation will not pass without one hell of a fight. Elected NFU officials and staff are putting together a national campaign to push back against C-18. We need the support and efforts of every single member – whether farmer or not. Each of us can play an important role as we put into practice the theme of our 2013 Convention, “Growing Resistance.”

Learn about C-18 by reading the bill itself or the materials that you will soon see on the NFU website (www.nfu.ca). Strategize with other NFU members or associate members about how your local can create the ‘buzz’ to put this legislation and its implications foremost in the minds of farmers and non-farmers alike. Write letters to your MP and relevant ministers. ‘Walk in’ – personally deliver – national and regional media releases, letters to the editor or op eds related to C-18 to your local paper, radio or TV station. Help organize a public information session for your community and your church. Talk to your neighbours and encourage them to join as members, or at least to support our resistance to C-18.

Friends, let’s get going. We have a job to do. Let’s do it like we always do – very well and with great passion.

—nfu—

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



A message from the...



National President

—by Jan Slomp

As I write this report, I am still in a high-spirited mood coming back from convention. Energizing discussions about resolutions, strong youth participation and educational and challenging panels filled the NFU's 44th Annual National Convention "*Growing Resistance*."

The shock of landing back in Alberta in blizzard-like conditions and ongoing news about a destructive political agenda revealed by Minister Ritz and other Harper government front men, doesn't allow us much time to focus on what the NFU needs to do.

At Convention, NFU past president Terry Boehm was inspired by a First Nation elder at an Idle No More tar sand walk last summer. The elder expressed his cultural duty of resisting destruction and of offering leadership and hope on the path to alternatives, for the sake of at least seven generations to come.

NFU folk have reason to be angry and discouraged; we've lost vital institutions and essential regulations, income-earning potential, and the ability to protect the natural world. Austerity budgets and the hype of signing undisclosed trade deals by government make this a time when the transfer of power from Canadian democratic institutions to private interests is maximized. This transfer of wealth often is directed by forces residing outside Canada. Those who live in and see the destruction and havoc across the country on a daily basis might easily fall into a state of paralysis.

This is why it is vitally important that determined and hopeful members of the NFU actively resist the destruction of the programs and infrastructure we value.

It is equally important that the NFU represents a voice for the alternatives that are well-rooted in our membership and in our international partners through La Via Campesina. By developing alternative policy frameworks and making plans to build a better food and farming system, the NFU will be among the leaders moving forward to address climate change, the looming limits of non-renewable resources and the development of renewable alternatives, access to and control of land and food sovereignty.

NFU members have a wealth of knowledge about new ways of farming: ecological production, grower-eater social contracts, community-based marketing systems and new ways to raise capital. That grassroots knowledge is a strength that can position the NFU as a leader in building the alternatives needed for a better farming and food system. Members reiterated time and again the need for a regulatory regime that has the proper funding needed to operate truly in the public interest during policy discussions on the NFU convention floor.

The clear challenge ahead is to stop our government from putting UPOV '91 into force and to propose to Canadians an alternative such as that presented at convention by Jack Kloppenburg: the Open Source Seed Initiative (OSSI). The emphasis on gene patenting and intellectual property rights are limiting access to the genetics needed to proliferate new food crop varieties, which endangers biodiversity and food sovereignty. OSSI plant breeders are obligated to make their discoveries and variety development freely available so that an unlimited genetic resource enhancing biodiversity and food sovereignty can be created.

We must form alliances with civil society organizations, unions, churches and other allied groups to build a social movement that pressures our political powers to stop their relentless entrenchment of corporatization and privatization, stripping away public interest infrastructures and programs that distinguish us as Canadians. We will proactively and preemptively torpedo destructive plans, such as Canada signing UPOV '91 and secretive trade deals. We will propose alternatives that increase genetic diversity and enhance our ability to feed ourselves. As NFU locals mobilize against these travesties, national staff and officials will create a toolkit to equip members to create awareness of the threats posed by this Act and to form the alliances needed. With the participation of all NFU members, we will stop Canada signing on to UPOV '91 and we will become vital proliferators in the quest to widening the genetic pool for food crops.

In Solidarity, Jan Slomp



A message from the...



Women's President

— by Joan Brady

The 44th convention of the National Farmers Union has, in retrospect, been prophetic. Our theme “*Growing Resistance*” was chosen as a commentary and action-oriented response to all recent attacks to democracy and public institutions. On December 9, 2013, the Federal Minister of Agriculture and Food announced Bill C-18, the *Agricultural Growth Act* – the mechanism that will allow UPOV ‘91 and other corporate friendly measures to be made into law. I would suggest that as happened when the government sought to introduce UPOV ‘91 in 2005, this announcement will rally the NFU and its supporters and allies to perhaps the biggest campaign in history. Seeds equal life, and that is what we are fighting for – the right to decide how seeds will be used and who controls them.

Many NFU convention attendees also participated in the pre-convention workshop, “*Organizing Campaigns – Building a Movement.*” Presenter Joan Kuyek shared stories and the finer points of a long career spent organizing resistance in the natural resource sector. She started the workshop with an exercise asking participants to share what energized them while in campaign mode and to also share some of the things that drained them. I would like to share with you some of the comments people made.

Energizing Campaigns or What Keeps Us Going!

- The people we work with: nice, determined, generous, fearless, bright, committed – many of them are young
- Knowing we are telling the TRUTH and acknowledging how critical our work is
- Staying positive
- Humour – sometimes; you just got [sic] to laugh; singing and dancing works too
- Well-coordinated efforts that make carefully use of everyone and each resource
- Support from unexpected places and underestimated public support
- Sharing knowledge and working with our allies – First Nations, other food groups and unions

- A campaign name, slogan and logo that unites us, catches attention and gives us consumer support
- Increasing momentum and energy as a campaign builds; marking and celebrating victories; measuring our actions
- Local solutions that multiply to address the issue
- So many tools to relay our message – faster and wider than ever before

The things that people found draining were often the opposite of energizers. The people who are determined, generous and young today may seem tired, grumpy, egotistical and getting older by the minute tomorrow. These de-energizers will always be there, we can choose to focus on the positives. Paying more attention to those energizers will go a long way to helping us build relationships and work to each others’ strengths as we gear up to meet the challenges ahead. It will not be an easy road but it is a necessary one. Let’s walk down it together!

As I begin my fourth term as NFU Women’s President, I welcome the opportunity to work with a new roster of elected officials. I know they are not daunted by the challenges ahead. They may be new to their positions but not new to the NFU, and we have been well-supported by their past efforts on behalf of the NFU. A heartfelt welcome to National President, Jan Slomp; National Youth President, Alex Fletcher; Vice President of Policy, Ann Slater; Vice President of Operations, Coral Sproule; and Youth Vice President, Lisa Lungard. Finally, a special welcome to Marcella Pedersen, Women’s Vice President. I look forward to working closely with her in the upcoming year.

I also wish safe and prosperous futures to those valued officers who have stepped down – all of whom are devoting more time and attention to their families and their farms. I know that the entire membership echoes my sentiments. So thanks for your passion and hard work, Terry, Colleen, Cammie, Paul and Kathleen. All the best and please keep in touch!

In Union, Joan Brady



A message from the...



Alex Fletcher,
Youth President

Youth

Convention

I would like to extend a big thanks to everyone involved in planning the convention this year and to all whose participation made it a success. I travelled home feeling encouraged that we have such a thoughtful, passionate and engaged group of people focused on resisting corporate control of our food system and building food sovereignty.

It was also encouraging to have a good turnout of young farmers and associates at the convention this year. At the youth caucus meeting, there were 28 participants, both new and familiar faces. We were fortunate to have with us Sara Dent, coordinator of Young Agrarians, and Blain Snipstal, a farmer from Maryland and leader in the La Via Campesina North American region. Both Sara and Blain spoke about the work they are doing as well as opportunities to collaborate further.

This year, we used some funding to subsidize the cost of accommodations for 15 youth at Angela's Bed and Breakfast instead of offering youth travel bursaries. We booked the whole house and received a generous discount from the owner who supports the work of the NFU. This was a good opportunity to reduce costs for youth to attend the Convention and to have more time to connect and strategize.

Cammie Harbottle, who has served as Youth President for the past four years, stepped aside at this Convention and I agreed to stand for the position of Youth President, contingent upon her remaining involved and providing me with guidance, which she is happy to do. It has been great working with and learning from Cammie over the past year. She has done a lot of work to organize and strengthen the NFU Youth network, and it is very important to me that we maintain this momentum.

Joining me in this endeavor is Lisa Lundgard, our new Youth Vice President. For those of you who have not had the pleasure of meeting Lisa, she operates a vegetable CSA on her family's farm in Peace River, Alberta (Region 8). They also grow alfalfa for seed, raise

leaf cutter bees for alfalfa pollination and raise grass-fed beef. I have gotten to know Lisa over the past few years at NFU youth retreats and am very pleased to be able to work more closely with her.

Video Project

We have started a video project about seed sovereignty as part of the NFU's seed campaign. Youth members Terran Giacomini and Dean Harder are leading the charge and have already put in tremendous effort during the convention. We booked a side room where they installed lights, a backdrop, and sound absorption material to shoot two full days of interviews with members and guests about their views of and experiences with seed and seed-related issues such as UPOV '91. Over the coming weeks, we will be transcribing the interviews, collecting more footage and editing. We would also like to receive any clear, well-lit video footage of your farm and some of the activities that happen there. For more information, to offer financial support or editing skills to this project, please contact me at nfuyouth@nfu.ca.

March Youth Retreat

Planning is underway for the annual youth retreat, which we will again hold on south Vancouver Island. We are still working out details, but if you would like to be kept updated please get in touch with us at nfuyouth@nfu.ca. Both Lisa and I will be monitoring that email address.

Once again we are grateful to the National Farmers Foundation for approving our funding application for this Youth event. We also really appreciate the contributions we received for the silent auction, which once again generated a good sum to help fund our work over the upcoming year. On behalf of the youth, thank you for your continued support!

In Union, Alex Fletcher



The Need for Resistance and Dissent in Healthy Societies

FEATURING: Dave Oswald Mitchell (Beautiful Trouble), Sheelah MacLean (Idle No More) and Anne McGrath¹ (consultant)

Citizens cannot avoid resisting and dissenting because they feel it's not 'nice' or not their 'thing,' they're too busy or don't know how; someone else can/will do it; or gut-level fear of confronting authority. They must engage, because without resistance and dissent, democracy cannot exist. This panel looked at the subject area from three perspectives: non-partisan politicking, organizing and implementing.

Coming from activist roots (his father was an organizer with the NFU), Dave described how the book and website “Beautiful Trouble” (BT) was born in 2011 from the ‘creative activism’ of social movements like the Egyptian Spring, Occupy Wall Street and Idle No More. He and co-editor Andrew Boyd gathered a team of writer/activists from around the world to distill “ideas gleaned from those on the front line.” BT is divided into four sections: tactics (specific forms of creative action, such as a flash mob or an occupation); principles (hard-won insights that can guide or inform creative action design); theories (big-picture concepts and ideas that help us understand how the world works and how we might go about changing it); and case studies (stories that show how principles, tactics and theories can be successfully applied in practice).

“Inequality is legislated,” said Sheelah, a ‘once-removed’ farmer of a successful immigrant family



Photo: Sheelah MacLean and Dave Oswald Mitchell.

who achieved middle-class status due to hard work and government policies such as low-cost farm land, rights to vote, travel and market freely and public education.

Now she sees unions and farmers fighting the same battles as indigenous

peoples: demonized in the corporate media and fighting to protect their collective rights – even for the right to have collective rights. The only real way out Sheelah believes, is through education about how inequality really happens, why poverty is increasing, why corporations can trump the rights of citizens to protect their interests. Social movements, she said, can end wars (eg. the Vietnam War), take down governments (the Egyptian Spring) and corporations (Bolivia threw out Bechtel). Solidarity is how farmers, unions, indigenous peoples and others can fight this government, these policies, together.

Anne McGrath calls herself a practitioner in the art and science of creating change through electoral campaigns, where the best defense is a good offense. She said no one can afford to stand back and hope things work out, but instead asserted the need to be aggressive – to be out there and fighting every single day to make sure the organization and the solutions proposed visible and well-known. McGrath referred to the need for message discipline and clarity; to maintain focus, especially if others say “It’s over and time to move on”; and to broaden the base by finding points of agreement instead of division.



Photo: Anne McGrath

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¹ Anne McGrath was Managing Director with strategic communications company, ENsight when we confirmed her participation. In the interim, she returned to the NDP to lead preparations for the 2014 election.



Food Sovereignty, Farming and Farm Labour

FEATURING: Nettie Wiebe (farmer, Professor of Ethics at St. Andrews College, and former NFU president); Stan Raper (Coordinator of AWA Support Centres, UFCW); and Karen Pedersen (Beekeeper)

What is the relationship between food sovereignty, migrant workers and Canadian farmers? This panel explored those topics in search of common themes and purpose.

Food sovereignty came to the fore in 1996 when La Via Campesina (LVC), a global network of small farmers and peasants, wanted to reframe the conversation and the language used to talk about food. At the time, political leaders and other civil society groups were describing and talking about food insecurity as an economic problem – an imbalance between demand and supply – that could be solved easily. If there wasn't enough food, just to grow more, using the newest technologies (e.g. GMOs), more inputs (fertilizers and chemicals) and bigger machinery on bigger farms.

The LVC, however, saw the problem as more complex. They said that there is lots of food in the world. When some people don't get enough to eat, it's about power and control: who decides (e.g. what is grown); who pays (e.g. for what and how much); who bears the risk (e.g. bad weather); and who profits. The problem is about the imbalances among those who contribute to the food system. That's why it was necessary to reframe the 'food insecurity' problem using political rather than economic or agronomic language.

The process of developing the text was difficult because of diverse cultures, experiences and interests, but the principles of food sovereignty hammered out by those farmers, peasants and progressive thinkers are now almost 18 years old. They are recognized by more groups each year as being a robust, inclusive and sustainable framework for a better, fairer food system for all, including farmers and farm workers.



Photo: Stan Raper

Migrant and temporary farm workers (TFW) can be a sore point with farm organizations according to Stan Raper, who said this was the first time he'd ever been invited to speak to a farm organization at their convention. He also said that the NFU was the only farm organization with policy supporting the right of migrant workers to unionize.

In 2000, seasonal migrant workers near Leamington, Ontario – Canada's Tomato Capital – were on strike and Stan Raper went to investigate. He and others gathered some union funding for the Global Justice Caravan Project, which travelled around Ontario to document the status of migrant workers. The 2001 report was

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(Resistance and Dissent in Healthy Societies, from page 7)

damning, but garnered funding to set up the first Migrant Support Centre in Leamington. Organizers were there to stay, which some corporate farms in the area didn't like. They tried to shut the Centre down, eventually buying and bulldozing the house the Centre rented, hoping to drive them away. They're still there, and they've expanded.

The Agricultural Workers Alliance of the UFCW has support and organizing centres in ten locations across Canada, where labour rights such as EI, seniority and recall, and health and safety standards have been garnered through collective agreements. Corporate farmers and foreign governments challenge them at every turn, but in Quebec, which has the best labour rights laws in Canada, the AWA/UFCW has negotiated 19 collective agreements with temporary, seasonal and local farm workers.

A 5th generation beekeeper who has worked as a temporary farm worker, Karen Pedersen has hired temporary foreign workers (TFW) since 2007. In 2006, seven Canadians committed to work in her apiary, but none worked a day and few had the courtesy to call and say they weren't coming. She believes that Canadians think that physical labour is beneath them, not a stepping stone in a life's journey as it has been for previous generations. They want someone else to do the work – just not foreigners who take jobs away from Canadians. Hiring TFWs has demonized Karen in her own community.



Photo: Nettie Wiebe (left) and Karen Pedersen (right)

It takes Karen up to eight months to bring TFWs to her farm. She says that it is not cheaper to hire foreign workers – she pays twice the Saskatchewan minimum wage. Application processes change frequently, and must be re-started when they change in the middle of an application. She pays \$270 (new fee) to get the labour market opinion (LMO) needed so she can hire two full time and five part time skilled TFWs between May and October. Advertising starts no later than June for a job to begin the following May – but who looks for work that far in advance? She sets up housing, does payroll, takes the workers for driving tests, groceries and medical care. She teaches and monitors compliance with health and safety standards, and provides on-the-job supervision. It's a lot of work.

Karen believes that the government is entrenching TFWs - replacing seasonal Canadian workers who can draw benefits with TFWs who can't. It's a strategy that favours big business with staff to manage the TFW program. She also thinks that the government is managing this file to divide natural allies. Temporary foreign workers should be allies with small and medium-sized family farms because all are trapped in and poorly treated by the same corporatized food system - but they aren't. Unions and TFW should be allies with farmers, but their interests have been set against each other, in part because corporate farms have sullied the reputation of all farmers. On the whole, this government's strategy to divide us from each other and our common interests is working.

The National Farmers Union takes on issues that don't have simple solutions. The temporary foreign workers (TFW) file is one of them, says Karen. It will take some time to sort through the diverse interests and opinions of members and migrant workers.

What we do know, however, is that only food sovereignty has the values that can encompass the diverse and contradictory interests of all the players in the food system so that food is produced by and for people instead of for corporate profit. And that's what Karen knows. —ntu—



Our Seeds – Our Stories

On November 13, 2013, the federal government announced that UPOV '91 would be adopted in Canada by August 1, 2014 – which made this session on November 29 very timely.

Youth President Cammie Harbottle and Youth Vice President Alex Fletcher opened with a short presentation about UPOV '91 and its implications for farmers – areas familiar to long-term members but not to recent members and visitors. After the presentations, convention participants discussed their experiences related to seeds and seed issues with others at their tables. Volunteers recorded highlights of the table top discussions that will be collated and reported back to members via a subsequent *Union Farmer Quarterly*. That information will also help to inform the NFU's seed campaign strategy.



Photo: Alex Fletcher, NFU Youth Vice President

Five tables, randomly selected, reported briefly to the convention floor about their discussions. Here is a summary of what was said:

- A new small farmer bought a seed cleaning plant and advertised its availability in the community. Monsanto saw the ad and wanted to make sure that farmers were not cleaning protected seed varieties to be re-used in the current crop year. They viewed – and had the legal right to view – the seed cleaner's customer lists to see how many had signed TUIs for previously purchased protected seed. The table recommended that the authority to conduct such audits should be granted only to neutral third parties.
- Spelt seed and seed saving lays the foundation for more than just agriculture; they form an important basis for community – opportunities for farmers to get together socially as well as to share specialized equipment (like seed cleaning). More importantly, seed is about feeding our

spirits and souls, and encouraging connections among us.

- A group pointed to the everyday importance and awareness of seed in our lives – even our coffee or muffin. Seed is everywhere. There is certainty that UPOV '91 will cost small independent seed growers their livelihoods.
- Another table reported that UPOV '91 will increase the upfront cost of seed for farmers. With the already too-tight profit margins, it will be even harder to earn a living. Right now, corporations are offering premiums and incentives that help to offset higher seed prices. When UPOV '91 is signed, those premiums and incentives will likely be removed and costs will rise. Inevitably, the corporate “ratchet of control” will tighten.
- A vegetable grower who specializes in producing oriental varieties is finding it increasingly difficult to find seed for the varieties he and his customers prefer. Vegetable seed is increasingly hybridized, which means that seed-saving is limited and new seed is needed each year. If – when – vegetable seed is covered by UPOV '91, those costs will rise even higher.
- Another table reported that there are lots of stories to be told about seed, but the ones that really count can't be told. Farmers are vulnerable because if they talk openly about their use of seed, somebody is always listening. Somebody is documenting. And somebody will show up.



Photo: Cammie Harbottle, NFU Youth President

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Seed Sovereignty

Like food sovereignty, seed sovereignty needs a declaration of its principles – for a system that will rebalance power relationships between farmers and the few corporations controlling the global seed industry.

In this session, Jack Kloppenburg from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and Terry Boehm, farmer and NFU past president, propose models to lead the way to seed sovereignty.

Imagine a seed research and breeding system with no breeding restrictions on germplasm; a robust, vibrant, and well-supported public plant breeding sector; numerous seed sources for farmers, gardeners and breeders; an enlarged participatory plant breeding program that integrates farmers and plant scientists; all conducted with respect for the rights and sovereignty of indigenous peoples, farmers and their communities. That is the vision that Jack Kloppenburg described in “Repossessing Seed Sovereignty: The Open Source Seed Initiative (OSSI) and Copyleft Licensing.” Borrowed and adapted from the world of software, the Open Source General Public License (GPL) that OSSI will release in 2014 will counter the success that corporations have had in their long-term efforts to separate farmers from the independent, autonomous reproduction of seeds. The approach will allow the creation of a *protected* public domain, where anyone can do anything they want with the seed breeding and genetic knowledge covered by the GPL except restrict its use by anyone else. For more information about OSSI, visit Jack’s webpage at <http://www.dces.wisc.edu/faculty/kloppenburg/>. There are links to a series of papers about OSSI written between 2008 and 2013, as well as information about how to contact him.



Photo: Jack Kloppenburg

Former NFU President, Terry Boehm described today’s economic and policy environment as creating enclosure mechanisms favouring privatization and corporate control of the seed industry, as is the case with canola. Farmers cannot freely use seed, and a number of legal mechanisms scare them into paying yearly and dearly for new seed. Such legal constructs separate corporations from market vagaries, guaranteeing predictable, steady corporate returns,



Photo: Terry Boehm

while bank accounts, equipment and seeds of *alleged* 3rd party infringers are seized as a precautionary measure before the merits of a case are heard and charges laid. Under the rules of UPOV ’91, corporations could extract money at any and every step of the production stream according to the value of the innovation and the benefit obtained by the farmer or producer.

This system does not work for farmers; an alternative is needed. Terry proposed a model Farmer’s Seed Act would counter the corporate control enabled by UPOV ’91 and leaked draft texts of the CETA and the TPP based on principles outlined in “*Farmer’s Privileges*” a *hollow promise under UPOV ’91* (p. 20, Union Farmer Quarterly – Fall issue, available online at <http://www.nfu.ca/story/union-farmer-quarterly-fall-2013>). Just a few of the principles described there include: no restrictions on seed cleaning, conditioning or stocking; no requirement for seed cleaners to give out client lists; royalties only possible at time of seed sale; no endpoint royalties or cascading rights; varieties clearly in the public domain and available for unrestricted use when PBRs end; a public appeal mechanism and a binding public commission to settle disputes (i.e. patent, PBR infringement, etc.) between farmers and companies outside of court; a market harm test; full field testing and merit requirements for new varieties; no inspections or taking of samples on farmers’ land and of their crops without the farmer’s explicit permission, or the presence of and verification of sampling and testing by a neutral third party; no need to be an accredited plant breeder to register a variety; and mechanisms to facilitate the use of land races (e.g., Red Fife wheat).

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Farm Practice as Political Strategy

The most political actions of all are the choices one makes every day. In this session, four farmers share their thoughts about farming as political strategy. Paul Slomp raises grass-fed beef near Ottawa, Ontario, Lyle Orchard grows organic grains on two quarters of land north of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Randall Affleck is a dairy and grains farmer from PEI, and Virginie Lavallée-Picard has a 0.35 acre micro-farm near Victoria, B.C.

Paul Slomp describes himself as an unlikely beef producer: vegetarian, young and owning nothing. He raises 40 grass-fed cattle on rented land about 20 kilometres outside of Ottawa. He caters to 250 urban customers with no freezer space or who do not eat much beef, but who are willing to pay a premium to know where their meat comes from. His animals are butchered at a local abattoir, and he holds the packaged beef in rented freezers to make periodic shoe-box sized deliveries during the year. Paul mentioned too many political actions to include in this article, but here are just a few teasers. He wants to tread lightly on the planet and produce food with the least environmental impact; he rides his bike to the farm both ways every day - 40 km. Transparency and openness are critical – everything Paul does is open to see or discuss. He posts financial statements online and has an annual meeting with customers to discuss business plans and hear their input. Paul fosters relationships – with customers, among customers and with his local community. He avoids or minimizes debt, and if he must borrow, he goes first to friends and family who lend at lower rates but are repaid at higher rates than banks offer.

For his mid-life crisis, Lyle Orchard bought a cheap red vintage combine instead of an expensive red vintage sports car. With his life as a renovator



Photo: Lyle Orchard (left) and Paul Slomp (right)



Photo: Virginie Lavallée-Picard and Randall Affleck

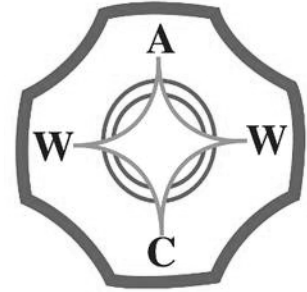
and builder growing more meaningless in a consumerist society, Lyle and his partner decided in 2008 to buy some land and go farming – an act of personal resistance to the wholesale eradication of small-scale farms and rural communities. They bought 280 acres, left all treed areas, natural grass and wetlands alone and set up organic buffer zones and erosion control, leaving 150 cultivated acres. Earning a living from such a small holding might seem optimistic, but Lyle pays nothing for herbicides, pesticides, chemical fertilizers or TUAs. He uses second-hand equipment that he repairs himself, saves seeds, and sells into organic markets. When his \$800 combine broke down after four years of service, he replaced it with a \$1000 diesel machine found on Kijiji. Finding a small tractor is more problematic – he competes with livestock producers and acreage owners. Lyle is committed to protecting the environment and believes that the only way to farm sustainably is organically. It is doable, practical and profitable, and in line with his commitment to resist corporations, to which he gives as little money as possible.

Randall Affleck struggled to get a grasp on what farm practice as political action looked like before deciding that for him, it's about the people you associate with, the questions you ask and the

(continued on page 23...)



ACWW



Report on the 27th Triennial Conference in Chennai, India in October 2013

Women's President Joan Brady and Women's Vice President Kathleen Charpentier recently attended the 27th Triennial Conference of the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW). The conference was held in Chennai, India from September 26 – October 02, 2013. The over 300 delegates, women representing their organizations from all over the world, converged on the Chennai Trade Centre to learn, share and reconnect. The theme of the conference was "Empowering Women Worldwide: Educate, Encourage and Enrich."

The ACWW works in partnership with its members, offering mutual support, friendship and practical help to women and communities around the world. ACWW has over 460 member societies active in over 70 countries. With Consultative Status at the United Nations, ACWW gives women a voice at international level through its links with United Nations agencies. ACWW also funds small scale local development projects which are requested by local women to suit their needs. The Associated Country Women of the World and their member societies share a focus which includes poverty reduction, health and education.

After a number of years of non-attendance, the NFU was welcomed back and some appreciation was shown, which reflected the work done by previous NFU women members. In particular, Colleen Ross was remembered for her impassioned speech against GMOs while speaking against a resolution at an earlier conference in Australia. At that time the ACWW passed the resolution encouraging developing nations to embrace the technologies associated with the green revolution. This year, there was a different tone on the conference floor as many had seen and experienced the limitations and lack of control inherent in Monsanto and similar companies' agendas and



Photo: Kathleen Charpentier, NFU Women's Vice President (l) and Joan Brady, NFU Women's President (r) attend the 27th Triennial Conference of ACWW in Chennai, India.

regret was expressed that Colleen's warning had not been listened to.

Another wonderful connection that was made was with the chair of ACWW's United Nations (UN) Committee, Sharon Hatten of British Columbia, Canada. A good friend of former NFU Women's President Shannon Storey, Sharon was thankful and facilitative to the participation of the National Farmers Union in the Conference and encouraged us to get involved on a UN level. The Associated Country Women of the World have consultative status with the UN in various committees including the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO). She will connect with our organization when there are opportunities to participate in the various consultative processes.

The conference was hosted by the Daughters of Mary Immaculate, a Catholic mission that worked with women and children to increase food security and educational opportunities as well as providing

(continued on page 13...)



leadership and entrepreneurial training. The mission also supported over 15,000 students in primary, secondary and collegiate levels, many who are also housed in their orphanages. The Sisters of the DMI worked with many other similar agencies to bring change to both urban and rural areas of India.

Conference keynote, Sheelu Francis, from the Tamil Nadu Women's Collective shared her work with the conference and its guiding principles. Her agency worked predominately in the rural areas dealing with issues of women's equality, violence against women, the caste system, environmental rights and elder rights. She inspired the conference when she shared that she had been inspired by the women who lived in the slums. She learned courage, patience and the ability to persevere from these women who lived on the brink of society.

One example of a Women's Collective project has been the revival of growing millet, a grain traditional to the Tamil Nadu province, one which provides nutritious grains, straw for various uses and a crop that could be grown without mechanical means. The work of the Tamil Nadu Women's Collective has been recognized by the 2013 Yale Agrarian Studies Conference with a Global Food Sovereignty award, and Sheelu visited New York City, USA in mid-October to accept their prize.

The highlight of the Conference was the day trip that brought buses of ACWW members to isolated villages outside of Chennai. In each village, a local women's support group hosted the group. The welcome was fabulous; incense, flower garlands, drums, strewn petals and heartfelt generosity made us feel like important dignitaries. The women and



Photo: Traditional opening of the ACWW Conference, the carrying of the flags.

children gathered, provided programs which included traditional dance, speeches, skits and more. In one village, a young woman shared her story of getting out of her poverty and how attending the DMI's Women's Support Group, she was able to let her talents shine and is now a village leader with the ability to get government support for the community. Working with other community women, they have developed a zero tolerance stance on spousal abuse and violence against women. She now works in the same Women's Support Group to empower her neighbours.

It required considerable effort and expense to attend the ACWW Triennial Conference but we both feel that it has been worth the effort. We come away with increased understanding and appreciation for the work that ACWW has and will continue to do on an individual project level. Together with other Canada area member societies, the commitment was made to support a community development project in the global south. Resolutions concerning violence against women, female genital manipulation, maternal health, birth registrations and e-waste were debated and passed. As member societies we are asked to bring these resolutions forward to our organizations and from there to our governments. The ACWW resolution process has the potential to communicate messages and actions worldwide as resolutions once passed will be shared with all member societies (70 countries/9 million women worldwide) and in turn, their respective governments to activate. Three of the resolutions were brought forward to the 2013 NFU National Convention and another will follow in 2014.

It is the Women's Advisory intention to remain connected to the ACWW and its Canada-area members. We will continue working to complement the goals of this organization with the expertise and the strong agricultural focus of the NFU. Potential involvement at a committee level and purposeful involvement with our Canada-area partners will positively affect rural communities in Canada and around the world. 2014 is the United Nations year of the family farm and the world will be looking to understand the significance in pursuit of a sustainable future.

Thank you for opportunity to represent you and learn so much.

~ Joan and Kathleen



The Beingessner Award for Excellence in Writing

The National Farmers Union (NFU) would like to congratulate Alana Krug-MacLeod (age 16) of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, who was the winner 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.

Getting to the Roots: Reconnecting Consumers and Farmers

—by Alana Krug-MacLeod, Age 16, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

My summer ended with a journey to a permaculture convergence near Rocky Mountain House, Alberta. There I was introduced to some innovative approaches to agriculture and to the people who do it. I had already visited a food forest and permaculture garden at Craik Ecovillage; overnighted in rural Saskatchewan at a permaculture farm complete with livestock; and participated in a backyard permablitz in Saskatoon. These choices were motivated by my intensifying awareness that the food we eat and the way it is grown is critical not just to people but also to the welfare of our environment.

Governments can play a role in awakening citizens to this critical awareness about the importance of food related issues, and doing so would be the best possible way to help future farmers succeed. Good policy at all three levels of government would be necessary to allow this food-awareness to take place.

Connecting consumers to farmers is essential for building community awareness about the issues farmers face, and one way to do that would be to support local growers. By buying food from farmers in their region, consumers build relationships with

producers, learn about how their food is produced, and keep money circulating in the local community. This approach reduces the transportation miles of food items, helping the environment. To achieve this goal, local government could support outlets such as farmers' markets by building infrastructure. Tax money invested would return to the community as farmers spend money locally, making this a financially viable option. Such approaches are only one step towards consumers purchasing locally grown farm products, as only a small proportion of farm goods could actually be sold in such ways. Mechanisms for fostering local food consumption would have to be developed so that producers working within a small radius of any given community would satisfy the majority of food needs.

Towns, cities and municipal governments could support an even more local approach to food production. Rather than lead to competition with local farmers, doing so would actually help support farmers because once people got their hands dirty growing food they would see how much work is involved, better understand some of the costs and difficulties faced by farmers, and value farmers more

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highly. Reconnecting people with the source of their nourishment and enabling them to prepare meals with fresh, unprocessed foods would benefit farmers and consumers rather than food processors and transporters - allowing a higher percentage of food costs to be returned to farmers. It would also lower the environmental footprint of food consumers, benefitting the environment. Local governments could facilitate this change by establishing by-laws that permitted vacant lots to be used for food production and by approving legislation allowing some animal production in back yards. Local governments could continue to support community gardens, and to seek out ineffectively used green spaces, designating them for food production. In addition, they could plant fruit and nut-bearing trees and shrubs in public areas - parks, boulevards, and along streets. Intensifying food production in cities and towns would raise consumer awareness of local foods, and build support for local farmers.

The provincial government could encourage local food consumption in two main areas of its jurisdiction - education and health. Use of locally-produced, nutritious foods would lower medical expenses for society by improving the health of the general population. Establishing contracts with local farmers to supply the food used in medical facilities would benefit farmers, patients, and tax-payers. Likewise, since provincial governments govern education, every province could establish integrated lunch programs in schools. These programs would involve growing food on school grounds, or purchasing fresh food from local farmers. Learning to produce food; getting physical exercise from productive and meaningful labour; and practicing meal preparation with produce grown locally would prepare students to value farming at a young age. Through the education and health care systems, provincial governments could play a significant role in ensuring that farming would be viable for future generations.

In order for the legislation and food-related initiatives at more local levels of government to be effective, some major policy decisions at the federal level would have to be re-examined. For decades, emphasis has been on establishing free trade agreements and on building trade deals with countries. However, some kinds of protectionism would need to be reasserted if Canada is to regain control over its food production and consumption policies. The loss of farmer owned selling monopolies that can compete with the few powerful multinational corporations that monopolize the markets restricts farming for future generations. New alternatives are needed, ones that give farmers collective control over where their products are sold and for how much. If farmers are to stay on the land and earn a viable income, they will have to be able to pass land down from generation to generation. Ensuring that this is not financially onerous is critical. Programs such as land banks, while controversial, allow new farmers to enter into food production without the financial risk required to purchase their own land. Establishing land trusts that ensure agricultural land remains available for food production is another mechanism that would ensure success for future generations of farmers. Any approach that counters the tendency to larger farm sizes and foreign and absentee land ownership is a means to support farmers directly. More farms and smaller farms owned by local people would build strong communities and a collective voice for farmers. These are essential actions that need to be taken at the federal level to support farmers.

All levels of government have a role to play in supporting the next generation of farmers and a responsibility to improve our understanding of the value and importance of managing our country's food supply. Building a culture that values food and agriculture and in which citizens know and appreciate the true cost of growing healthy nutritious food locally would lead to a world where farming is valued and farmers earn viable incomes.

—nfu—

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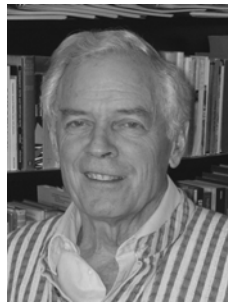
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Feeding the World: Countering Corporate Spin

Corporations and governments around the world trumpet the message that only industrial farming and its associated technologies can feed the world's burgeoning population. Many question that analysis, including author and theologian thinker Brewster Kneen, and GRAIN agronomist Camila Montecinos, who joined us via Skype. Brewster and Camila reframe the discussion about feeding the world to "counter the corporate spin."

In "Parasites and Rights," Brewster reframed discussion about the dominant food system based on the host-parasite relationship in livestock, wondering how many corporate parasites the food system could support before irrevocably harming the hosts – water, soil, people, etc. The answer depends on the parasite's 'badness' – whether it is benign or murderous. Parasites are part of the natural order of the world and cannot be eradicated, but we can aim for parasite loads that minimize harm to the host. The question is: What should that level be?



Brewster Kneen

To be sustainable, the dominant food system must have a lower parasite load, according to Brewster. Giant corporations such as Monsanto, ADM and Cargill suck the life out of environments and people in the push for agricultural modernization and market control. Even seed has not escaped the clutches of corporate parasites, as we have moved from using freely harvested indigenous, autonomous, bioregional and diverse common seed to using registered, pedigreed and common seed. Now, commodity seeds have come into play – hybrid, GE, patented, monocultural (uniform) seeds sold by corporations and which farmers pay royalties to use.

Brewster believes that we are well on the way to building a new 'parasite-free' food system. Seeds are one of the foundational bricks, as are various food initiatives across the country. We are doing more than just setting up "alternatives;" we are heading toward an economy that will address societal issues such as public health, nutrition and social justice rather than shareholder returns.

Camila provided selected global data about changes in the number of farmers, the size of farms, and costs and profits in her presentation,

"Are farmers an endangered species?", based on research that GRAIN will soon publish. She described the consolidation process as starting with medium farms, moving to smaller farms only when medium farms were consolidated.

Camila reported that in the '20s, a farmer retained 55 to 60% (\$1 for \$1.75) of production value, but by 2000-2006, it was 20% (\$1 for just over \$5) of production value, spending the remaining 80% on industrial inputs. Purchased inputs cost about 25% of the total value of animal production in the '20s, but 60% by 2000 – 2006 – a growth of 50 times compared to an increase of 20 times in production value. Seed costs increased 80 times and pesticides, 400 times (due to GM varieties). With farmers more reluctant to buy seed than other inputs, corporations began the push to 'modernize' the seed sector; UPOV '91 is one of the results. GRAIN's data also shows that small farms regularly out-produce big farms, despite their smaller land base.



Camila Montecinos

Small farmers also control markets for more than half (\$4 trillion) of global food consumption worth at least \$7.5 trillion (2005). We spend only \$2-3 trillion on oil, so food is a huge target for big corporations – one that consumers cannot avoid if they do not grow food. To take control of the whole market, corporations are forcing small and medium farmers – eventually larger farmers – out of business using the guise of modernization, efficiency, economic rationality and "feeding" the world to accomplish the goal. The justification is deceptive; corporations want only to control food markets.

We must defend and protect small and medium farms – family farms, peasant farms – whatever form they take wherever they are. While large farms guarantee hunger, only small farmers can feed the world.

—nftu—



Big Oil v. Food Sovereignty: Threats to Food, Land and Water

Big oil is in the news and not in a good way: Mégantic, Keystone, Line 9, leaks in a Michigan pipeline. But how is big oil related to farming or food sovereignty? NFU Board member Doug Scott, NFU member and energy analyst Rick Munroe, and Communications Coordinator for Alberta's Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation Eriel Desranger share their 'big oil' experiences and analysis.

Doug Scott watched a 42-inch oil pipeline being laid on a quarter-section of his family farm, the fifth major pipeline on that quarter. Two more will come in 2015 and 2017, and all will transport heavy oil or diluted bitumen. Doug described how farmers in his area worked together to speak to the company with a common voice. The pipeline company paid for the group's lawyer, and they were able to negotiate a list of conditions the contractor had to meet before the project was completed. Watching your land be stripped, ripped apart and reassembled is challenging, especially after the right of way is approved; it is no longer yours and you are not welcome. He described the daily noise, dust and traffic lined up waiting to get into the work site; the 15 to 20 trucks that idled in the local restaurant parking lot every morning, literally shaking the ground; the problems of getting farm equipment by heavy equipment on roadways and in fields; the soil compaction that no amount of reclamation will return to previous condition.

When the National Energy Board (NEB) began considering a proposal to reverse and increase by 25% the flow in Enbridge's Line 9, Rick Munroe requested intervener status on behalf of the NFU.



Photo: Rick Munroe

Initially he had supported the proposal but three discoveries changed his mind. Line 9 has just a 1/4 inch wall instead of the half inch typical for a 30-inch pipe. Similar pipe was used only in one other place: Michigan. While Line 9 is approved to carry 240,000 barrels a day, it has carried only 64,000 daily for years, so the flow would actually increase by 500 per cent. As well, Enbridge consistently fails to adhere to

legislation and regulation. They display a reckless attitude to pipeline risk and public welfare with actions such as not using pipe with 1/2 inch walls or putting valves on both sides of river crossings. We saw that failure in Michigan. Rick described situations such as a gasoline pipeline within 5 feet of the Finch subway stop in Toronto with nothing to prevent gas from flowing into the subway should the line rupture, and unmarked or inadequately marked gasoline pipelines near vulnerable populations. Nor is the NEB requiring Enbridge to comply with the spirit and intent of the law, which is why we recommended that the Enbridge application be denied.

Eriel described Ft. Chipewyan as an icon in the tar sands resistance movement, downstream from and subject to effects from oil sands activities, where the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation's (ACFN) right to maintain their traditional way of life is guaranteed under Treaty 8. The ACFN are a vibrant people who depend on traditional food sources that in turn, depend heavily on the Athabasca River lands. Eriel described a vibrant industry that depends on open pit mining, steam injection and tailings ponds, but is both devastating and toxic: one that removes everything indigenous peoples need for survival – traditional foods, sovereignty, culture. More dirt has been moved in the tar sands than for the Great Wall of China, the Suez Canal, the Cheops Pyramids and the 10 largest dams in the world together, but that less than 0.1% of lands disturbed since the '60s have been reclaimed. ACFN is challenging governments to protect Treaty 8 rights and enforce water rights and species at risk legislation. Having defined a protected zone over which they will assert their treaty rights, ACFN is also suing oil corporations to stop pit-mining in areas critical to caribou and bison. It may be the only way to protect the environment for everyone.

—nfu—



Therefore Be It Resolved...

RESOLUTIONS PASSED AT THE NFU'S 44TH ANNUAL CONVENTION
NOVEMBER 27TH TO 30TH, 2013 – OTTAWA, ONTARIO

1. RAW MILK

WHEREAS there is a continually increasing demand for raw milk and other dairy products and for farmers to provide a service to meet these demands, and

WHEREAS there is an existing community-shared agricultural model to accommodate this process which addresses financial management, risk management and supply management, and

WHEREAS scientific evidence increasingly demonstrates that these products can be produced safely,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union support a herd-share CO-OP model whereby shareholders own the herd and receive their raw dairy products and the farmers provide various services.

2. Health Canada

WHEREAS Health Canada, in terms of approving virus testing and new genetic material, including genetically-modified organisms, must have more authority than it presently does,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU demand that Health Canada exercise its statutory mandate to conduct a full review, in the public interest, before any new virus regulations or genetic material can be approved.

3. AGRIINVEST PROGRAM

WHEREAS government contributions to the AgriInvest program have been reduced by one-half of one percent and this money has been given to innovation and new technology,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union request that the money taken from AgriInvest and given to "innovation and new technology" be returned to AgriInvest.

4. BANKRUPTCY AND INSOLVENCY ACT

WHEREAS the federal Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act defines exempt property by the province in which you live, and

WHEREAS many farm families from time to time are forced to file for bankruptcy, and

WHEREAS many provinces do not include the principal residence as exempt property in these situations,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the National Farmers Union request that a farm family facing bankruptcy be enabled to keep their principal residence as exempt property under the federal Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act.

5. INDIAN HEAD TREE NURSERY

BE IT RESOLVED that NFU National support the efforts to keep the Indian Head Tree Nursery operating in the service of prairie farmers.

6. VARIETY REGISTRATION FOR ROUNDUP READY ALFALFA

WHEREAS the Ontario Forage Crop Committee has recently recommended up to six Roundup Ready alfalfa varieties for registration, and

WHEREAS seed distribution companies can now ask the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) to register those varieties, possibly within the next month,

THEREFOR BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the NFU encourage NFU locals, regions and members to take similar action.

7. RACTOPAMINE

WHEREAS the use of the feed additive drug Ractopamine has become routine in Canadian beef and hog fattening operations, and

WHEREAS human health concerns from the consumption of Ractopamine-treated meats have led to the product being banned in 160 countries, and

WHEREAS this drug not only potentially endangers the health of consumers but also reduces the number of countries willing to accept Canadian beef and pork exports making us further dependent on the U.S. market,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU lobby the federal government to prohibit the use of Ractopamine.

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the NFU lobby the federal government to introduce a policy that ensures food production takes priority over biofuel production.

8. BIOFUEL PRODUCTION

WHEREAS a percentage of fuel is mandated by law in Canada to be derived from biofuel sources, and

WHEREAS in times of constrained production this may lead to inflated costs of feed, thus having an adverse effect on livestock producers and on consumers of meat and grain foodstuffs,



THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU lobby the federal government to introduce a policy that ensures food production takes priority over biofuel production.

9. PIPELINE SAFETY

WHEREAS pipeline failures adversely and directly affect the health and safety of rural Albertans and the food they produce, and

WHEREAS the Alberta government commissioned Group 10 to produce a report on pipeline safety and this report has been in the hands of the Alberta Minister of Energy since December 3rd, 2012 and was to be available to the public by March 12, 2013 but has not yet been released,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the NFU demand the Alberta government immediately release the Group 10 report on pipeline safety.

10. MEMBERSHIP/COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

WHEREAS the NFU needs to grow its membership and better assist its current membership with relationship development,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the NFU will implement a Communications Committee and/or Membership Team before the 2014 National Convention.

11. RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL NUTRITION EXPERIMENTS

WHEREAS Canada's record in dealings with First Nations Peoples has been shady and bordering on racism for at least 150 years, and

WHEREAS reservation and residential school systems were employed by the Canadian federal government as a means of cultural and physical assimilation until well into the last century, and

WHEREAS recently partially-released and shocking reports revealed that nutritional experiments were carried out on malnourished First Nations children both on reserves and during their forced removal to residential schools from their families,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU strongly urge the federal government to release, in entirety, the documents pertaining to nutritional experiments made on First Nations children, the extent to which they were carried out and to call a public enquiry into this shameful matter. These documents are to be released to the First Nations leadership and the Canadian public.

12. RAIL SAFETY

WHEREAS the recent train derailment and wreck in Lac Megantic, Quebec utterly devastated the heart of that community and killed dozens of its citizens and polluted local soils and water, and

WHEREAS as a result of this terrible event, the Canadian public was shocked to learn that rail companies have been allowed largely to self-regulate and to send trains carrying hazardous materials operated by hopelessly inadequate one-man crews through Canadian communities, and

WHEREAS since May 2013 there have been 13 train derailments in Canada, nine of which involved hazardous materials,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU strongly urge the federal government to strengthen the roles of the Transport Safety Board and Transport Canada, with a view to resuming their role as hands-on regulators of Canada's rail transport systems.

13. NEONICITINOIDS

WHEREAS neonicotinoid pesticides have been conclusively linked to negative population health impacts on honeybees as well as native pollinators, birds and aquatic invertebrates, and

WHEREAS the sale and prophylactic use of neonicotinoids benefits large chemical corporations at the expense of farmers and the ecology that supports them,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU will lobby the federal Minister of Health for an immediate five year moratorium on the use of the neonicotinoid class of pesticides in seed treatments for field crops.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the NFU call upon Health Canada to require completion of independent scientific studies, unencumbered by industry influence, on the sub-lethal and synergistic effects of neonicotinoids on honeybees, wild pollinators and other affected species, including the farmers who use them, with full results made public and available for review and comment prior to the lifting of any moratorium on the use of neonicotinoid seed treatments.

14. CLIMATE CHANGE

WHEREAS climate change is catastrophic and is already having effects on farming across Canada, and

WHEREAS Canadian agriculture is currently a major contributor of greenhouse gases, and

WHEREAS soil organic matter is a transformative tool in sequestering carbon and mitigating climate change, and

WHEREAS individual farmers, as stewards of their soils, have the power and responsibility to be major agents of climate change mitigation, and

WHEREAS farmers may not clearly understand how climate change affects them and may not have the knowledge necessary to sequester carbon in their soils,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU provide information and support to farmers about the effects of climate change in their local region as well as mitigation strategies as they relate to farming practices.

(continued on page 20...)



BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the NFU remind farmers that they have a heroic roll to play in climate change mitigation through their farming practices.

15. GM SWEET CORN

BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU will undertake appropriate measures to secure a moratorium on the production, importation, distribution and sale of GM sweet corn in Canada.

16. PROHIBITING LANDFILLS IN FRACTURED BEDROCK

WHEREAS the Environment Canada report Threats to Sources of Drinking Water and Aquatic Ecosystem Health in Canada says, “all landfills will eventually release leachate to the surrounding environment and therefore all landfills will have some impact on the water quality of the local ecosystem”, and

WHEREAS Alberta and Newfoundland and Labrador have some restrictions against landfilling in hydrogeologically unsuitable locations, and

WHEREAS the Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA) is currently working to change the Ontario Environmental Protection Act to prohibit landfills within fractured bedrock and other hydrogeologically unsuitable locations within Ontario,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU oppose the establishment of new or expanded landfills within fractured bedrock and other hydrogeologically unsuitable sites.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the NFU make the appropriate ministries of federal, provincial and territorial governments, as well as environmental and community groups (eg. CELA) working to protect Canada’s groundwater and surface water from contamination from landfills, aware of the NFU’s opposition to the establishment of landfills within fractured bedrock and other hydrogeologically unsuitable sites.

17. PROHIBITING THE USE OF BISPHENOL A

WHEREAS the chemical Bisphenol A (BPA) is the main building block of polycarbonate plastics and is used in many consumer products and household goods, such as food and drink containers, plastic baby bottles, medical devices, sports equipment and toys, and

WHEREAS the chemical components of BPA are dissolved and leach into their contents, poisoning our bodies and damaging our health,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU strongly urge the federal government to prohibit the use of the hazardous chemical Bisphenol A.

18. MATERNAL HEALTH

BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU urge all levels of government to provide Canadian women with well trained and resourced, quality maternity health services and to improve maternal health education for all women and girls to ensure the best outcomes for mother and baby, giving particular regard to the special needs and isolation of rural women.

19. STOP THE PRACTICE OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU calls on all people worldwide to stop the practice of female genital mutilation, female circumcision and cutting which endangers the health and life of young girls.

20. ELECTORAL REFORM

WHEREAS according to the NFU Statement of Purpose, Purpose No. 5 (p. A-2 of Policy Statement) “Government holds a heavy responsibility toward determining the structure of food production in this nation by the philosophical approach reflected through legislation and public policy. Farmers must exert every legitimate means of assisting our legislators in providing legislation that can assure equity for farmers and the survival of a flourishing rural community in Canada. The development and promotion of sound farm policies by farmers upon governments is essential to the future welfare of farming,” and



Photo: Beekeeper Marcella Pedersen wears her “Queen Bee” attire at special events such as NFU conventions, rallies and demonstrations.



WHEREAS the integrity of democratic processes in Canadian politics has a direct impact on the ability of the NFU to fulfill Purpose No. 5: to advance legislative and public policy goals on behalf of its members, and

WHEREAS the “First Past the Post” electoral system has repeatedly allowed false majority governments, most recently a political party that received only 39.5% of the popular vote won, disproportionately, a majority of seats in parliament,

WHEREAS this government that represents a minority of Canadians has repeatedly acted against the interests of farmers and without regard for the policies of the NFU (and other public interest groups), for example by dismantling the Canadian Wheat Board, signing (in principle) the secretive Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement and allowing the approval of genetically modified alfalfa, amongst other affront,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the NFU expressly call on all national parties and independent candidates to commit to reforming the federal electoral system in order to attain a system that is proportional in its representation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the NFU call on all national parties and independent candidates to cooperate and act strategically in order to attain a majority of members in parliament that are committed to reforming Canada’s electoral system.

21. STACKED TRAIT GMOS

WHEREAS growers are constantly engaged in the search of new technology to improve production, and

WHEREAS it benefits growers to assess each technology on its own merits,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU demand of the federal government that with all future GMOs, including those with stacked traits, each trait be assessed and approved individually and any combination of stacked traits be separately assessed and approved as a whole prior to considering any variety for registration.

22. MEMBERSHIP STRATEGIC PLANNING

WHEREAS the National Farmers Union has seen a steady decrease in membership in regions, and

WHEREAS the NFU is struggling financially as a result of the dwindling membership,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU Board of Directors strike a strategic planning committee to focus on developing a strategy to grow this organization’s membership numbers, membership knowledge and financial means.

23. RAW MILK #2

WHEREAS the NFU has previously adopted policy in support of developing a protocol for sales of raw milk within the supply management system, and

WHEREAS the additional market for milk exists among consumers who seek raw milk, and

WHEREAS the first step to obtain legal sales of raw milk is changing Health Canada’s prohibition on sales of unpasteurized fresh milk for human consumption,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU’s raw milk working group continue its work towards implementation of a regulatory framework for the legal sale of raw milk for human consumption in Canada.

24. YOUTH MEMBERSHIP

WHEREAS the NFU’s strength is as a policy and advocacy organization, and

WHEREAS we currently have a deficit in membership, and

WHEREAS new farmers are essential to the succession of the NFU and therefore should be a focus of membership, and

WHEREAS we are seeing young and new farmers being highly attracted to and mobilized around skill building and social networking opportunities,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU explore a pilot membership drive in collaboration with organizations that provide skill building and social networking so as to better provide relevant and complementary benefits to attract new membership.

25. BRITISH COLUMBIA AGRICULTURAL LAND RESERVE (ALR)

WHEREAS the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) was set up to protect viable farm land in BC, and

WHEREAS the current provincial government has initiated a process to dismantle or weaken the ALR and allow agricultural land to be further developed and mined,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU publicly acknowledge the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) is a model that should be replicated across Canada and maintained and strengthened in BC.

26. SEED AND TRADE COMMITTEE

BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU Board of Directors consider creating a special committee to work on seed and trade issues.

(continued on page 22...)



27. PROVINCIAL WHEAT AND BARLEY COMMISSIONS

WHEREAS the demise of the single desk Canadian Wheat Board saw the collection of check-off monies from prairie wheat and barley sales decentralized to the provinces, and

WHEREAS there are millions of dollars to be allocated by the provincial commissions that have been and are going to be established in Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba, and

WHEREAS there has been a continued attack on the storied Canadian history of public plant breeding and a transferring of rights, wealth and power from farmers to the corporate agri-business sector, and

WHEREAS the right of farmers to save, reuse, clean and share the seed they have harvested is now under threat by the federal government's intention to sign Canada onto UPOV '91, and

WHEREAS the interests of farmers and agribusiness corporations are adverse, and

WHEREAS too many of the organizations that claim to represent farmers have been co-opted and seem to advance the interests of agribusiness at the expense of farmers,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU calls on the prairie provincial wheat and barley commissions to ensure that they distribute the checkoff monies they are responsible for in a manner that strengthens the public plant breeding system and ensures the continued right of farmers to save and reuse their seed and that the commissions put farmers before the corporate sector.

~ end of resolutions ~

Manitoba's NFU Tax Office Closes

NFU Winnipeg Income Tax Service office closed November 30 after serving the farmers of Manitoba for 60 years. A barbeque was held after the Region 5 meeting in Clear Lake in July 2013 to recognize the four retiring employees. The retiring staff wish to thank all NFU member-clients for their business and support over the years. It has been a privilege to serve you.

John Cameron has been a tax consultant for the Farmers Union for 50 years. A native of Roland, Manitoba, he worked for the Manitoba Farmers Union for the first five years, and from 1969 for the National Farmers Union as Office Manager. In the fifty years John worked for the Farmers Union, he took only three days sick leave – truly a loyal and dedicated employee. Best wishes, John, for a well-earned, happy retirement.

Bill Zettler worked in the tax season as a Tax Consultant for 43 years – the last 35 with the NFU. A native of Walkerton, Ontario, he moved to Portage la Prairie in 1977 where he farms and operates a farm machinery business. He also plays piano in a country band. Bill and his wife, Florence, have a family of nine, including an IT manager, two chartered accountants, two lawyers and four doctors.

Goldwyn Jones, a longtime and active NFU member, worked in the tax season as a tax consultant for the past 18 years. He very capably took over the duties of the late Albert Werbicki, a 29-year employee, who suffered a stroke. Goldwyn operates the family farm at Tilston, Manitoba, as well as his own environmental consulting business.

Pamela Larusson has been an office employee of the NFU during the tax season for 10 years. Her duties included contacting clients, matching information with files, and e-filing the income tax returns. —nfu—



Photo: John Cameron (left) and Bill Zettler (right)



(Farm Practice as Political Strategy, from page 11)

discussions you have. People today don't ask big questions like author Wendell Berry does in his essay, "What are people for?" The NFU, however, does have big discussions. They help us understand where we are in the bigger system, whose agenda we're following, the tricks of big agribusiness and how they influence decision-making. Randall doesn't believe in pushing NFU positions on his friends. He starts where they're at and just drops in the occasional comment, saying things like voting is likely the least important political action thing a person can do. It's more important to understand and participate in public policy-making - which farmers find hard. They're used to seeing a problem and solving it, not working in a group to advance an issue. But the NFU was set up specifically to discuss and come up with solutions to big human problems. According to Randall, we live in exciting times, with technology that enables us to share our message instantly and globally. We can bring anyone into a meeting anywhere with Skype. We could even buy a DNA sequencer, get into genomics and breed our own crop varieties. We just have to get by the biggest barrier of all - the one between our ears.

Just the fact that she and her partner are farming is an act of resistance, according to Virginie Lavallée-

Picard - high land prices and few viable options for financing stop most would-be farmers. She and Alex operate a 0.35 acre biointensive micro-farm on Vancouver Island near Victoria. They work fulltime in their CSA to sell 75 weekly food boxes over sixteen weeks, growing high value vegetables with edible roots and tops. As the only new young farmers in their area, the local government has reached out to ask about their reality, their needs, and what might make agriculture more viable in the long-term. Agricultural land in the area costs \$100,000/acre because of development pressure from Victoria and there is no housing. Virginie said that most new young farmers focus on maximizing community engagement and minimizing dependence on inputs from corporations that have over-taken agriculture and which sell farmers just five things: chemical fertilizers, pesticides, fuel, machinery and debt. Their focus on community engagement means they control their messaging, including information about business decisions and farm finances. Transparency, after all, is an act of resistance. Their customers are allies who point out when prices should go up a little and offer to help finance potential expansion. Rather than building equity, Virginie and Alex build relationships. Clearly it's working. —ntu—

We Remember ...



DAVID LING

David Ling of North Winsloe, PEI, husband to Edith, father to Dr. Kathy Ling Brewster (Jamie) and Lisa Ling Sherren (Adam) and 'Grampie' to grand-daughter Ella Sherren, passed away peacefully on October 14, 2013. He is also survived by brothers and sisters, nieces, nephews and cousins and many friends.

David will be remembered for his legacy – his commitment to looking after and protecting natural resources, and his courage in making changes to care best for the land. He was a pioneer in organic farming, proud of returning to the earth what it gave to him. David took particular joy in watching the soil turn a rich brown colour, improved by his farming practices. He loved to teach others about what he had learned over the years, sharing and discussing videos or reading material. David didn't forget about his livestock; they too received first-rate care.

According to daughter Lisa, David "was always trying new ideas and approaches to his farming methods. He went back to using old seed varieties for grains and potatoes and perfected a recipe for minerals and natural compost for the soil." Her parents both "saw themselves as stewards of the land, borrowing it only for a short time."

David joined the NFU at the founding convention in 1969, and was especially committed to helping small family farmers going through tough times. He attended almost every local meeting, acted as director of Local 104 for several years, and usually attended the annual National Convention, where he looked forward most to talking with farmers from across the country. At the 2011 Convention, David and Edith received the prestigious National Grassroots Member Award in recognition of their dedication to and work in the NFU. Although David didn't seek recognition for anything he did, he was honored to be selected for this award.

David was laid to rest in Portage Cemetery, just a mile or so from home after the funeral service on October 18. More than 900 people attended the visiting hours - a testament to the esteem with which he was regarded.



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Region 3: 3127 County Rd. 36S, Bobcaygeon, ON K0M 1A0 Ph: in ON 1-888-832-9638 / Ph: outside ON (705)738-3993

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11	<u>Big Oil v. Food Sovereignty</u> – Doug Scott, Rick Munroe, Eriel Desranger	
12	<u>Farm Practice as Political Strategy</u> – Paul Slomp, Randall Affleck, Lyle Orchard, Virginie Lavalee-Picard	
13	Closing	

DAY 1
 Session 1 - 4

DAY 2
 Session 5 - 8

DAY 3
 Session 9 - 13

