

Excerpt from

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Honourable senators, our next witnesses are representatives from the National Farmers Union.

Mr. Peter Dowling, Ontario Coordinator, Member NFU National Executive, Dairy Farmer, Howe Island, Ontario, National Farmers Union: By way of introduction, the National Farmers Union welcomes this opportunity to meet with you today and bring the views of Canadian farmers on this critical issue.

The National Farmers Union is the only voluntary, direct membership national farm organization in Canada and the only one incorporated under a federal act of Parliament which was done in 1970. We are non-partisan and work towards the development of economic and social policies that will maintain the family farm as the basic food-producing unit in Canada.

The NFU believes that individual farmers must work collectively to assert their interests in the agricultural industry, one which is increasingly dominated by multi-billion dollar corporations.

I will give the committee some history of our involvement with rBST. In 1988, we adopted a position in support of a ban on BST.

Members were concerned about cow safety, farm-level economics and potential consumer rejection of the dairy products from cows injected with the non-therapeutic, performance-enhancing and synthetic growth hormone.

Since that time, our organization and its members have been actively monitoring the review of BST in Canada, as well as the experience with this product in other countries. We have become even more aware of the massive resistance to this product among Canadian farmers and consumers from coast to coast, and of the incontestable scientific, economic and humanitarian reasons for that resistance.

Scientific studies and consumer research over the past decade have confirmed the wisdom of our opposition to this product. The recent events and disclosures, stemming largely from the work of this committee, have further reinforced our position.

The NFU applauds and thanks the Senate for the motion it passed last May urging deferral of the licensing and the tremendous work done since that time by the senators and the committee bringing to light the facts involved.

In appearing before you today, we wish to outline for you the major issues as farmers see them, and the reasons why the NFU maintains its opposition to the use of BST in Canada. In the interest of time, we will highlight the

main points and refer you to the written submission for details. This statement is submitted with two appendices. We will be glad to answer your questions upon the completion of our presentation.

Our first concern is that this is a threat to Canada's health and safety and the Canadian dairy industry. It puts at risk the health of Canadian people and it is a menace to the well-being of Canadian cows. It has also been borne out again and again over the past few weeks that it is destroying the public's trust in Health Canada and the Canadian regulatory system.

The main points we raise include the risks to the dairy industry. We point to strong and consistent consumer opposition, in the form of surveys, petitions, letters and post cards, that have been generated over the years. Another risk to the dairy industry includes a probable reduction in consumer demand. One Industry Canada survey said that one-third of consumers would say "no" to milk if BST were licensed in Canada.

There are also potential problems for producers and processors in the case of dual marketing. Our cooperative marketing system does not allow us the opportunity to meet the needs of dissenting consumers. It is quite an intrusive drug in that respect as well.

Risks to human health include the fact that rBST is a non-therapeutic drug which is unnecessary. It does not improve the milk or the cows. It does not have any nutritional attributes.

Studies point to rBST milk having higher levels of IGF-1. We cite those studies. IGF-1 is absorbed into the bloodstream and is associated with cancer. There is a need for long-term toxicology studies, which are normally required for non-therapeutic veterinary drugs.

In terms of risks to animal health, there are more than 20 harmful side effects listed on the label. Defining these as management problems blames the farmers. Farmers in the United States resent being called poor managers because of problems they have had as a result of using this drug. Farmers bear the cost of cows' illness and burnout.

I should now like to turn to the risks to trust in Health Canada and the regulatory process, which include the problem of undue influence of the pharmaceutical and chemical industries on Health Canada. Decisions must be made independent of the flawed United States approval process in light of new information available and allegations of improper process and pressure in the United States as well.

It appears that Health Canada scientists are being pressured to approve BST. Of concern as well is the Gaps Analysis Report, censorship and external review panels and the problems that we have with those. Canadians now know that we cannot trust Health Canada or rBST. There has been enough bad news reaching the Canadian public in the last few years about this product that the perception is that it cannot be trusted.

In conclusion, Canada currently produces sufficient milk to meet domestic demand. We do not need increased milk production. The drug rBST threatens to increase the Canadian milk supply while significantly reducing consumer demand. The result would be lower net farm incomes for dairy producers, a result they can ill afford. Farmers cannot afford rBST's damaging effects on the health of their cows.

Canadian consumers want pure milk. The drug rBST has the potential to destroy public confidence in milk, as the Mad Cow disaster did in England for beef, if it appears that milk from rBST-treated cows can cause cancer.

In summary, rBST harms cows. It erodes consumer confidence in dairy products, threatens to undermine our milk system and destroy farmers' incomes. It may cause cancer and other serious health problems in humans. Clearly, approving rBST would violate the imperative so aptly quoted by Senator Keon in the debate last spring: "Do no harm."

For all these reasons, the National Farmers Union urges that the federal government extend the ban on rBST indefinitely. Health Canada must be prepared to stand up to corporate interests and state that, because rBST is unwanted by consumers and farmers alike, it will not be approved.

We call on you and your Senate colleagues to recognize and represent the clear consensus of Canadians in opposition to rBST. We call on the Canadian government to keep this intrusive technology out of Canada.

I will now ask the other members of the delegation to make a brief statement before we proceed to questions.

Ms Lorraine Lapointe, Dairy Farmer, Martintown, Ontario, Past Director, Ontario Milk Marketing Board:  
Honourable senators, this morning I was quite upset that the first panel seemed to be very arrogant in providing you the proper information. They told you that they have been looking at this matter for eight or nine years. However, I have documentation from Health Canada dating from 1984, when experiments were being done in Ontario, Quebec, Alberta and British Columbia.

I requested that there be a public inquiry on the milk being sold from these herds in Ontario. I participated in that inquiry. Even though shredding has been going on at Health Canada, it does not matter. I have enough documentation, which I will provide to you, to indicate that the animal division of Health Canada states there is no human health problem. This was in 1984.

We have directors of the Bureau of Veterinary Drugs who wrote to Dr. John Burke of Guelph University about his concerns regarding safety in humans. The response to that letter from John Burke at Guelph University was, "Do not worry, John Price of Cyanamid Canada says there is no human problem. There is nothing there, so why be concerned about it?"

I was stunned to see that the answer from Health Canada on that issue was that it is safe for human consumption. Why was that being said when all along it has never been tested on the human side? We have Health Canada, the animal drug division saying, "There is no problem." On the human side they were saying, "Well, we have not done the tests yet."

You have only scratched the surface on this issue and other issues about how drugs are evaluated here. That is probably because it is the fast-track system that is being put in place.

I was disturbed by this in 1988 when it all came out.

It forced me to fight a battle. You could say I was fighting a battle for my children. I did not want my children or anyone else's children in Canada to be exposed to this.

When I started digging, I received many threats but it did not matter because this is very important, not just to human health but to the health of the dairy industry.

I have heard comments made about the dairy industry, that we are not efficient or that we cannot compete with the United States. That is not true. We are very competitive, in that we can market our milk in one pool in this country.

I have all the information that you need. I think you may not be asking the right questions about the rat test. Guelph University did do a rat test in 1989. That research was conducted on the bioactivity of milk from BST-treated cows. They used only male rats. I was absolutely disgusted when I read this and I called one of the researchers at the university and I asked, "What is happening here? They only used male rats." The researcher told me, "That is not the biggest problem. The biggest problem is that we had to use rats that had their pituitary glands

removed." I asked, "Who made you do this?" The reply was that it was a directive from the pharmaceutical companies. Senators, you have only scratched the surface of what is going on here.

I have enough evidence to show that we had directors of the animal division saying that there is no human health hazard with the milk and the milk was being sold on the market from 1984 to 1988 in all these provinces.

Ms Joyce Hutchings, Dairy Farmer, Westport, Ontario, National Farmers Union: Honourable senators, I am proud to be a dairy farmer. Ours is a family farm. Our son and daughter have recently taken over the farm. There is no way that a growth hormone will ever be used on our farm. Even if it is approved and declared to be "safe" it will never be used on our farm.

The reason that I am so adamant about that is in October 1994, two of my colleagues and I drove down to New York state to visit a farm where they had been using Posilac. It was a herd of 200 or 300 cows. This farm was a picture when we drove in that day. The farmer knew we were coming. We found a beautiful dairy farm, a beautiful home, and a very exasperated farmer.

He took us on a tour through the barn. He talked for approximately two hours. As we walked through that barn, we could see that those cows that were left were thin, nothing like the cows that we left that morning at home.

His local vet had introduced him to Posilac at a seminar for local farmers. Most of the farmers took home enough to inject their cows. Before very long, problems were starting to show. Before we go any farther, this gentlemen, every month, got \$3,000 extra for his milk because it was of top quality. At the time we were there, he was being fined \$3,000 a month because of the high somatic cell count and underproduction. It was a scene that haunted me for months. Some of those cows had mastitis. They could not be treated because there was no drug available at that time to treat them for mastitis induced by the extra pressure on the system.

For other cows, their feet went bad. You should look at the list of warnings on the back of the Posilac, known as Nutrilac in Canada. Some of them, he said, dragged themselves around the barn for weeks. Fifty of his cows left one night on a big transport truck because they could not be made better. They were gone. He does not know where they went. He called Monsanto and they said, "It is poor management, sir." Poor management? This is a farmer who had top-quality milk with a \$3,000 bonus every month and he is told he is using poor management and was fined \$3,000. That is \$6,000 less on his income.

Those cows were a sight to behold. We stayed there for approximately two hours. We took notes. We asked for and received permission to video the interview. Even today, I am haunted by the look of that gentlemen who almost lost his farm and his marriage, all for the sake of another 10 per cent increase in milk production.

Of the 30 or 35 farmers that took all these drugs home that night, only two were still using it. The farmer next door, who had many beautiful show cattle, would not talk about it to his neighbours. He was ashamed.

You now know why our farm will never use growth hormone. It is not necessary. If the government feels we need more milk, tell us. We are always over quota. Our cows will produce. With good management, you do not need a drug to make those cows milk. That is how strongly I feel. There are many efficient farmers in our area. They do not want it. The consumers do not want it. The processors do not want it. Who really wants it?

There has been much time and money spent on discussing this subject today for so few farmers. How many dairy farmers are there in Canada? Not many, compared to the money that is being spent on a product that we do not want and we do not need. We can produce the milk. We do not need a drug. Those cows do not need it, either.

Mr. Richard Lloyd, Manager, Ontario Office, National Farmers Union: Honourable senators, I have been mostly involved in research, passing information around. The one thing that has always struck me, though, is that there

has been so little talk about the cows. It is quite an honour for us to be here today, as inexperienced and nervous as we are, to talk about the thing that this is all about.

Everyone can talk about JECFA, and so on, but it is very annoying to read the label. First, there was the American label that we read years ago, but now to give it a name like "Nutrilac"? It is insulting to read the label and then have the disclaimers that if you manage properly you will not have these problems.

We heard about Mrs. Hutchings' experience when she went to the states. You cannot maintain a management level of that skill all the time. Why would they introduce a product that is not curing anything, with those ramifications? Again, we repeat the list over and over. No one wants it. Why are we spending all this time and money on rBST? Why have I devoted 10 years of my life fighting this? Mrs. Lapointe and our organization have also devoted 10 years to this fight. It is clear to us that we do not need this.

I have seen all these officials from JECFA, and these world-wide bodies which have a significant amount of control. I appreciate Senator Whelan's insight into these matters. The power of the FDA is shocking. I would like us to be an independent country here and look after our interests, and especially our cows.

Senator Fairbairn: There are a number of us who, on reading the material that has been put together and, indeed, the gaps analysis, who have been deeply concerned about the effects that have been observed on cattle. I do not suppose anything has been as vividly portrayed or conveyed as your personal observations on this issue. There is a very strong concern on the part of committee members about the animal safety aspect of this as well.

This document certainly has information in it of which I have not been aware in terms of your list of quotations about the various people involved with Health Canada who, according to your document, have indicated that there was no problem with human safety.

I do not know whether you were here for this morning's testimony, but certainly the information we are now receiving in 1998 is that the reviews are not only ongoing but expanded, in terms of ensuring that no decision will be made unless this safety factor is believed to be sufficient.

Do you have any comments on the reviews that are currently being undertaken on this issue? Your comments certainly reflect those that we heard last week from the Dairy Council and of the Dairy Farmers. We will certainly be asking questions of other people about the information that you have in your brief.

Do you have views on the process that is currently underway in the health department, and the assurances that we have received from the minister, the deputy minister and so on, that there will be no decision made on this issue unless and until they are absolutely assured that this is not a health factor for humans and animals?

We know there is a physical problem with the animals.

Ms Lapointe: I should like to lead in that answer.

This morning it was indicated that one of the veterinarians on the reviewing panel comes from Quebec. Were any of the veterinarians on that panel involved in the experiments that were going on from 1984 to 1988 at any of the universities in Canada? That is one question that came to mind this morning. I wish to ensure that none of these veterinarians had anything to do with any of the experiments going on in these provinces from 1984 to 1988.

Mr. Lloyd: I have some fairly strong comments to make. I will start with my feelings about the development of the team at Health Canada, and the split into two reports of what initially were called external panels, and have now become expert panels.

In a nutshell, I see only ongoing cover-up happening here. First, when the scientists from within the department that had the expertise to do the review were given permission to do a gaps analysis report, two other eminent scientists were brought in. Why? They were not from within the department that contained that expertise. I believe they were brought in because the management wanted to have a report that did not show a consensus because the terms of reference of the external panels said initially that they would be set up because there was a lack of consensus within Health Canada. I saw a whole plan unfolding from very early on and it continued this morning.

This was, again, something we were aware of in 1994. I wish that I had brought the policy of the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association which I have in my files. It says in black and white that they think rBST is safe. It further states that if there are any animal health problems they are the responsibility of management. Of course they are, they are paid to do that.

These external panels are totally unnecessary. We had a report from scientists with Ph.D.s and 10 or 15 years of experience studying this who did a report. You cannot bring these people in. I now have that document.

It is a cover-up. I hope I am totally wrong, but I believe they will come in and say that it is fine.

Senator Spivak: Can we get a copy of that? Is that from the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association?

Mr. Lloyd: Yes, it is.

Mr. Dowling: To summarize, what we are hearing from senior officials at Health Canada, and what we actually see happening are inconsistent. It is difficult to build up confidence in the organization when there are these two different streams that seem to be in front of us all the time.

Senator Mahovlich: Do you have any idea when they started to study this particular product? You mentioned 1984 and 1989.

Mr. Lloyd: In Canada?

Senator Mahovlich: My experience with universities in the United States is that they study a certain chemical and they study it thoroughly before it is approved. I do not believe they would let it pass without that. Are we shadow boxing here?

Ms Lapointe: I have all the letters from Health Canada to the University of Guelph because of the public inquiry. All that had to be pulled for the public inquiry.

Senator Mahovlich: That is Guelph.

Ms Lapointe: Yes, but I am talking about experiments in Canada.

Senator Mahovlich: Yes, but I am referring to the United States. This must have been going on in the 1970s.

Ms Lapointe: That is not my problem. I am speaking as a Canadian and a mother. I have many problems with Health Canada stating that there were no human health problems with it, when the other arm of Health Canada was saying that they had not even looked at it. Do you not have a problem with that comment, namely, with officials stating that?

Senator Mahovlich: My point is that it is a world problem. If rBST is available in the United States, we will obtain it from across the border.

Ms Lapointe: I have no power to do anything about what is happening in the United States but I do here at home, I hope.

Mr. Lloyd: Senator Mahovlich, I heard similar comments from you last week, so I have brought for you some excellent summary pamphlets that were done by a group outlining what happened in the United States in the approval process.

You might be shocked to learn of some of the manipulations of data and people brought in from Monsanto to work at FDA in the key decision-making places. You will be shocked to read the story of the United States' experience.

Senator Spivak: May we all get copies of that?

Senator Fairbairn: In the second appendix to your presentation there are many references to various other exhibits. Are those available?

Ms Lapointe: Yes, they are.

Senator Spivak: We have not heard exact information. I understand that 25 per cent of the farms in the United States are using rBST; is that correct? Do you have any further information as to how they are doing, other than the vivid illustration that you gave us?

Ms Hutchings: I do not have information on the entire United States, but many American farmers come up to my area. We live in a big tourist area.

One farmer was telling us recently that he uses Posilac, but sparingly. For instance, if he has a cow that has a calf and she is not a good milker, he gives her a shot of Posilac, milks her for all she is worth and then ships her off for meat. As far as his basic herd, he will not kill them. Any stress on a cow will cause mastitis.

Senator Spivak: We have heard from the Dairy Council and the Canadian Dairy Farmers. Is there any other group within the farm community that is actually calling for rBST?

Mr. Dowling: There are groups in Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia that are calling for a ban.

Senator Whelan: Are those groups calling for a ban or for the use of rBST?

Senator Spivak: I am interested in groups that are asking for rBST to be brought in.

Mr. Dowling: Farmers, consumers and processors do not want it. When we say that, the question that comes back is who does want it.

Ms Lapointe: We do not know.

Senator Spivak: I have made the statement that farmers do not want it. I want to be absolutely sure that I am telling the truth.

Mr. Lloyd: My father was a farm appraiser for the Veterans Land Act. He asked the same question as you, "Are there any farmers that want this?" I said, "Dad, you know them all in your area, go out to the concessions, go down to the feed store and ask around to see if you can find any."

The next time I talked to him, he said, "You are absolutely right. I could not find any." There was not one.

Senator Spivak: The question has been raised by someone here that should the supply management system change would you be inclined to change your opinions. I know the answer, but I should like you to put it on the record. Someone did say that if we need to be competitive, we can produce more milk.

Mr. Dowling: Even if the supply management system does change, I would not anticipate that we would even want to change the system for the pooling of milk. That is an efficient system. It helps us to be more competitive. Even on an international market, it would make no sense to damage that in any way. Consumers will then not have the choice that was being spoken about this morning. If they did have the choice, who would be paying for that choice? It would be the people who had the concerns. That is usually how the scenario plays out. They would end up having to pay more for their milk and their children may not get enough milk.

Senator Spivak: I asked about the meat. The whole question of the antibiotic residue we were told not to worry about. However, a few years ago there was some problem with beef. They put hormones in the beef in the United States and it went to Italy and they have had unusual symptoms come about in babies in Italy. That is one of the reasons that the Europeans, even though the WTO ruled against them, were so strongly against importing hormones in beef because they had had this experience. Do you know about that experience in Italy?

I should like to know your views on the increased use of antibiotics and the residues of that in milk and meat and whether that can be solved by the fact that farmers must have a certain standard or else their milk is tossed out. What do you think about that?

Mr. Dowling: It is absolutely true that farmers must maintain a certain standard. However, the more exposure that livestock have to antibiotics or any other drugs, the increased risk there is of something getting into the food chain. There are many precautions taken to avoid that as well.

Ms Lapointe: I understand from speaking with people in the beef industry that the biggest loss for the beef industry are the injection sites on an animal. They must cut big pieces out of the animal because an injection site is spoiled meat. There is a loss there, too, that we are not looking at.

We ask is the economic problem here. It is a negative problem if we are to have a loss of milk tanks all over the place. I heard a representative from Monsanto at the hearing say to the media that, "We believe that consumers should have a choice. We will champion that. Well, yes in Canada there is a problem about pooling, but we will help them manage it."

Now they will help us manage the dairy industry in Canada. Maybe that is what their long-term goal is, I do not know.

Senator Spivak: There will not be choice because you cannot label it in Canada, as we have heard.

Senator Whelan: I will not ask many questions, which may surprise you all. I know these people and I congratulate them. With the resources that they have, they do not have money to bring a farmers' union representative from Australia.

Canada built one of the healthiest dairy systems in the world. As you said before, you hope that you would not lose that.



Some members of the committee are under the impression that we pay more for dairy products in Canada than Americans do in the United States. That is not true. The dairy products in Canada are cheaper than in the United States and are of a higher quality, too.

With respect to supply management, one of the ways to get rid of it started in the Uruguay Round. No farm organization, political party or organization asked it to be taken out of GATT. Supply management was organized within the rules of GATT. Big business and governments, not Canadian farm organizations, asked that it be changed to fit into the World Trade Organization.

Only one country can supply us with dairy products and guarantee that supply, and that would be the United States of America. If we were getting our supply of butter from them this year, we would be paying over \$3 U.S. a pound because there is a shortage. Many farmers, even with this great usage of rBST, did not get the production they wanted because the price for their commodities was too low. Senator Spivak asked the question that I wanted to ask, namely, if you knew of any farmers using it.

I spoke to Ian Cummings this week. He writes for the Ontario Farmer. He has evidence that farmers were buying rBST at the border in Vermont. He even has pictures of them and names. He provided those to his editor. Someone is not just buying it to bring it into Canada to put on a shelf. Someone must be using it someplace.

Mr. Lloyd: I would like to put this Ian Cummings' story to rest. I also have in my files early articles in the Ontario Farmer before he was a stringer. He is a pro-BST person. Sorry, there is one.

Several years ago, Ian Cummings developed the argument that if it was smuggled into Canada, it was here anyway, and so it might as well be approved. He has gotten away with this for years to the point where this Senate committee and newspapers are talking about all this smuggled BST into Canada.

I do not believe it. I am in agreement with the Dairy Farmers of Canada when they say, "If you know of someone, tell us." I once phoned all the way through the RCMP and Customs channels. I have all the phone numbers you could want. If you know of a criminal in Canada using rBST, report them. We do not licence bank robberies just because there are one or two robberies. Let us stop talking about Ian Cummings.

Senator Whelan: You have not taken Ian Cummings to court. You have done nothing to him. If you think he is false, swear an oath just like these brave scientists who came forward with something they felt strongly about.

Someone suggested that one of these doctors was perhaps not telling the truth. We have to go through all this and hash it out again, but if you have evidence that Ian Cummings is incorrect, take him to court. Fine that newspaper rather than getting into bed with him.

Ms Lapointe: He is a neighbour of mine. He is not worth the time and effort.

Senator Whelan: Many people read about him, though. That is why I am challenging you.

The Chairman: Honourable senators, I wish to thank the representatives of the National Farmers Union for appearing here today and for the information they have provided to the committee.

I regret to inform the committee that due to the prolonged length of today's hearings, Maude Barlow of the Council of Canadians had to leave for an earlier appointment. However, she left with us her presentation, which we will append to today's hearings.

The committee adjourned.

