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Ellard Powers – Canadian farm leader: 1934 to 2009

This photograph of Ellard Powers was taken in 1967 on the steps of Parliament Hill during a massive demonstration of 25,000 farmers. The farmers turned out in support of the implementation of a supply-management system for dairy in Canada. Ellard Powers, at the time the 1st Vice-President of the Ontario Farmers Union, served as co-chair of one of the largest demonstrations ever held on Parliament Hill. The event marked a crucial turning point in the establishment of the Canadian Dairy Commission. Ellard Powers, who farmed in the Ottawa Valley, passed away February 28, 2009.

A Note from the Editor

Deregulation falling out of favour everywhere except at Harper's cabinet table

The stock market collapse last fall and the global financial meltdown in the months since then have prompted many people to re-evaluate their basic assumptions about the economy. People who once

- BY TERRY FLIGH

expressed solid faith in the so-called "free market" have become more circumspect. It's a scenario that has happened before.

The parallels between the Wall Street collapses in 1929 and 2008 are stunning. The most entertaining and insightful history of the 1929 Wall Street collapse is a book entitled: **The Great Crash - 1929**, by the Ontario-born economist and Harvard University professor - John Kenneth Galbraith. Galbraith was born and raised on a farm in Dunwich Township and picked up his down-to-earth political views from his father, who was active in populist-style farm politics.*

The 2008 crash was precipitated by the sub-prime mortgage crisis. The 1929 crash also had its origin in a real-estate boom that - beginning in 1925 - artificially inflated Florida swampland prices and ignited a frenzy of speculation. One of the more colourful land speculators in the 1920s was a scam artist named Charles Ponzi - who had made his way to Florida - one jump ahead of the law - after duping thousands of his fellow New Englanders in an illegal pyramid scheme. The 2008 stock market crash re-aquainted millions of people with the term, "Ponzi Scheme" when investigators exposed a fraudulent scam of herculean proportions operated by former Nasdaq Chairman Bernie Madoff. In the 1920s, Lehman Brothers narrowly avoided bankruptcy in the crash - a feat the same company was unable to duplicate nearly a century later. In the 1920s, executives of many of the big companies that fuelled the speculation bubble profited handsomely from the crash - not unlike the AIG executives who diverted millions of dollars in government bailout money to their own pockets.

Also eerily similar is the behaviour of the stock market itself between October and the following summer months. The crash occurred in the fall, but in the ensuing months, there was a series of sharp drops followed by equally sharp - but short-lived - upturns that temporarily buoyed prices. Overall, though, the prices kept falling. The stock market crash didn't bottom out until 1933 - and stocks didn't fully rebound to previous levels until the 1950s. In the most recent collapse, the same pattern of sharp drops and temporary bounces is evident, but overall stock prices - and commodity prices - are still trending downward, while unemployment is climbing - with no end yet in sight.

In the midst of this economic uncertainty, the "conventional wisdom" (a term coined by Galbraith, by the way) of deregulation is increasingly being questioned. There is a great deal less public confidence now in the belief that corporations should be left to regulate themselves. In the United States, there is growing recognition that deregulation is responsible for the crisis, and a movement to protect the public interest by reining in corporations is gathering steam. The US Congress has held numerous hearings on the consequences of deregulation in the financial system, and is now examining the negative consequences of deregulation in the US food industry, where private companies are responsible for inspecting themselves while poisoning unsuspecting customers.

Meanwhile, the Harper government in Canada seems completely out of touch with the rest of the world, and is pressing ahead with its deregulation agenda, placing Canada's food system at risk by allowing private corporations to police themselves. The recent changes to the Canadian Grain Commission regulations to remove mandatory official inspection and weighing of grain shipments to the US is just one in a long series of negative actions in that regard. Likewise, the recent decision by the Competition Bureau to allow the sale of Lakeside Packers to XL Foods means there are now only two companies controlling nearly 90% of the country's beef packing capacity. It is highly unlikely that the interests of farmers or consumers are going to be given much of a priority by two companies whose main concern is generating ever-increasing profits.

*Galbraith recalled an incident in 1916, when he was 8 years old and accompanied his father to an outdoor political meeting. His father mounted a large pile of manure to address the crowd. "He apologized with ill-concealed sincerity for speaking from the Tory platform," Galbraith recalled in his autobiographical book, "The Scotch". "The effect on this agrarian audience was electric. Afterward I congratulated him on the brilliance of the sally. He said, 'It was good but it didn't change any votes'." —nfu—

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A message from the...

President

- BY STEWART WELLS

The Importance of Standing Up

The events of the last few years have underlined the absolute imperative to have a general farm organization that will stand up for Canada's family farmers—the National Farmers Union.

Anybody can talk a good game, but when it comes time to “answer the bell”, who is really there battling in private and public for the interests of Canada's family farmers? In my twenty years of experience in farm policy development it has been, and still is, the National Farmers Union.

With the recent passing in Ontario of Ellard Powers, we are reminded of the tremendous battles launched by the National Farmers Union and our members for the establishment of Canada's supply management protocols—a system that greatly benefits family farmers and Canadian consumers—a true Canadian success story.

A quest for justice for New Brunswick's potato farmers—farmers that were unfairly treated by the government of Canada—is very near to a successful conclusion. The National Farmers Union, and our NFU members in NB, were instrumental in researching, documenting and initiating the original legal action some 18 years ago. Recent victories in the court of appeal, and now the Supreme Court, are stating that our position was indeed correct and that the affected farmers deserved compensation. Where were the other farm organizations during the last 18 years of hard work?

It was the NFU, finding and building coalitions, that stopped the introduction of bovine growth hormones into Canada's dairy system. In 2001, the NFU built one of the largest coalitions this country has ever witnessed and was successful in pushing back the unwanted introduction of Monsanto's Round-up Ready wheat. It was the NFU that stopped the introduction of negative seed protocols included in UPOV-91 and preserved the right of Canadians to save and re-use seed.

In 2007, it was the National Farmers Union that led the way back to the courtroom in the successful case which determined that the federal government was acting illegally when trying to destroy the Canadian Wheat Board. Where were the other farm organizations? Talk to them privately and they will admit that the majority of their members support the Canadian Wheat Board. So where are they? Without the NFU, these battles would have been lost,

while the other organizations worried about “getting a meeting with the Minister”.

Likewise on the livestock issues and the destruction of the 100 year success story that is the Canadian Grain Commission.

Even though the ground has shifted considerably in the United States, our federal government continues to try and remove farmer and consumer protections. Every country in the world is now admitting that the deregulation of the financial world (financial globalization) has created one of the biggest wrecks in modern history. But our government is still trying to bring the same kind of deregulation and absolute corporate control to the grain industry. Bernie Madoff in the U.S. reintroduced the public to the term “Ponzi scheme”, but our government plunges on.

We need to understand that the so-called free trade agreements are the biggest agricultural Ponzi schemes ever created. The control over seeds, chemicals, fertilizer, patents, closed-loop contracts, research, food processing and distribution is being concentrated at an exponential rate—while the farmers and consumers are asked to live on the promise of better things just around the corner. The corporate world is paid in dollars and control, and farmers are paid in promises.

It is excruciatingly painful to watch now as Canada's cattle organizations, funded by tens of millions of check-off dollars, line up in Ottawa to beg for ad hoc taxpayer money. These are the same people that have worked for twenty years to bring us “free-trade agreements” which limit the funding that can be provided to farmers in trouble. Even as they lobby in Ottawa these people are still trying to reduce farm support in Canada through negative changes to the WTO and European Trade negotiations.

Canadian farmers have a choice to make, and now is the time. Choose the organizations and people that have brought you the current pain and ponzi schemes, or choose the NFU—an organization that has a proven track record of successfully standing up for Canadian farm families.

And don't forget to come to our 40th Annual Convention in Ottawa and be heard on the Hill. It takes determination, persistence, and dedication to the facts, but political parties do respond to pressure from voters.

See you in Ottawa in November,

Stewart Wells



A message from the...

Women's President

- BY COLLEEN ROSS

Direct marketing creates both benefits and costs

We're all familiar with regular farm work. But this new kind of "place-based" agriculture requires a lot of skills that our parents would never have dreamed were necessary. The winter passes so quickly because many farmers spend time designing or updating essential farm websites. We find ourselves creating brochures, price lists, pamphlets and advertisements to promote our farms and farm products. We are also learning how to use new, complex and detailed farm management and accounting software. All of these tools are essential to connect food producers with those who want and need to access the food we grow.

Farmers in the NFU are doing all of these things, maintaining their farms, caring for our families and remaining informed and involved in issues that are impacting our future. The women of the NFU play a particularly unique and central role, in that we tend to take on much of the marketing so necessary to this new kind of agriculture and food system.

There is also a new wave of farmers entering into agriculture as a second career - or as young people wanting to explore farming as a career. These new farmers are predominantly women. Our farm is a part of the Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training (CRAFT) program. We are receiving applications from young people, mostly university graduates, who want to spend a season on our farm and work alongside us to learn how to farm. Most CRAFT applicants are indeed women,
(continued on page 26...)

Introducing Kathleen Charpentier, NFU Region 7 (Alberta) Women's Advisor



Kathleen Charpentier, NFU Women's Advisory Committee member for Region 7 (Alberta) farms just south of Castor, Alberta with her husband, Richard Griebel.

Together they have four grown children. Kathleen has been farming the land for thirty years, producing naturally-raised meats. She and Richard are passionate about the soil, plants and animals, and they place a high value on their rural community and the beauty of where they live.

During the 1970s, Kathleen and Richard used "conventional" farming methods, then operated a small feedlot for beef animals in the 1980s. In the 1990s, they studied Holistic Resource Management and really started asking themselves critical questions about how best to treat their land and animals. Since 1999 they have focused on "raising the bar" for the quality of food they produce. "Our goal is to produce food that nurtures families and promotes health and vitality," states Kathleen. "We have successfully created a market of naturally-raised meats and have a knowledgeable and appreciative customer base of urban families that connect with us as their link to the land and their food. I feel this is a significant accomplishment as we live quite a distance from any city. I know what it means to be hauled out, the devastation of drought and grasshoppers, to pay exorbitant interest to the banks, and more. But I also know what it means to be with Mother Earth, to be a caregiver, the smell of soil, observing grass, making hay, and the never-ending cycles of life. I know and love the beauty of rural life."



A message from the...

Youth President

- BY NIGEL SMITH, YOUTH PRESIDENT

Fresh Milk in Ontario

A window has been opened in the dairy industry for new producers to get on board and gain a stake in the supply managed industry. Now let's hope that someone can climb through! In the last week of March it was announced that Dairy Farmers of Ontario would proceed with new quota policies and among those is the provision for 10 new farmers to gain access to quota each year. The NFU Youth, as well as individuals and farmers alike, have called for this type of program for years now and it is very encouraging that DFO is taking seriously the challenges that exist for new dairy farmers. The new program will make available a maximum of 12 kg of quota and the new producer must purchase a minimum of 12kg. In addition, there will be a cap of 10 participants in the first year of the project. Complete details are still being worked out and will be made available in July 2009. Also in the new quota policy changes will be the capping of quota price at \$25,000 per kg by January 1, 2010. The reduction in the price of quota is a good step toward making the dairy industry more sustainable and I think there is something to be optimistic about in this scenario. While not perfect, any expansion to another generation of new dairy farmers is encouraging.

I have been told by lending institutions that this proposal can in fact work and that viable business plans-not always an easy task in farming- can be constructed thanks to the 12 kg's of loaned quota. It is my hope that some young NFU members might be able to take advantage of this and contribute to the future on Canada's family farms.

The number of dairy farms in Ontario has been rapidly shrinking while herd numbers have increased dramatically. While this has meant that farmers are able to capture economies of scale and better standards of living, it has meant that there are fewer farmers in our communities and larger concentrations of animals on the ones that remain. Taking into account our stance that Canada needs more farmers and not less, even a small step towards increasing the number of farms in Ontario is a positive one in the face of trends that generally head in the other direction.

Anyone with an interest in this should check out the DFO website at www.milk.org

We are still extending invitations to the Summer 2009 NFU youth event to be held in Eastern Ontario. The weekend event will include education, crop touring and meeting new people. We hope to cover the cost of travel for participants and have a limited number of positions available so let us know if you are thinking of attending. Best of luck to all in Spring planting.

*In Union,
Nigel Smith, Youth President*



A message from the...

Youth Vice President

- BY KALISSA REGIER, YOUTH VICE PRESIDENT

Can't see the grass for the roots?

My family has been involved in the lawn mower business ever since I can remember. We like to cut grass. I used to spend my summers as a custom lawn mower for schools and farm yards. It was the first piece of machinery I learned how to operate as a kid. It's with this ongoing relationship with grass that I approach the term "grassroots" and really try to figure out what it means.

When I think of the roots of grass, I immediately think of our lawn grass. The roots that form an intricate network underground, sending rhizomes and stolons in all directions which in turn, and with a little moisture, send up soft tufts of glorious GRASS! We play on it, lay on it, it smells like heaven and we couldn't have a summer without it. One amazing characteristic about grass is that it can be totally drought ridden and appear practically dead, but one small rain and it greens up within days. Yup, I've always had a special place in my heart for grass.

So what does this have to do with the NFU and *our* grassroots? Sometimes I can't help but think we have an organization that has thriving roots under the surface of the soil, but can't seem to green up above ground. Are we concentrating too much on our traditions and history that it's preventing us from organizing the every day activities that make up our grass?

This July, the NFU Youth from across Canada will be meeting in the Kingston local where we'll be able to get up close and personal with some of the most prominent examples of how a grassroots movement can thrive. The local food movement goes hand in hand with local grassroots organizing. On the prairies, where most of our crops are exported and most of our food imported, we have become distant and romantic about the idea of local food. Has this affected our ability to organize locally? As we shift into a more local food system here, will we shift to more local organizing? Or could it be the other way around? If we start practicing more local grassroots organizing, could it result in a more local food system? I think it's worth a try.

I've realized over the last few years that the problems that we have organizing as young farmers are the exact same problems we all have. Too little time, too much work, not enough hope, and too much space between us. We've let it get the best of us in some places and the earth is looking awfully barren. The definition of a grassroots movement is "a movement driven by the constituents of a community."

I challenge you to give this paper, once you're done reading it, to a neighbor or a friend who is not an NFU member. Ask them to join the *new* farm movement. Let's start greening up above ground.

*In Solidarity,
Kalissa Regier,
Youth Vice President*



Regional Reports



ONE (Maritimes)

REGION

- BY RANALD MACFARLANE

Greetings, good NFU . The regional meetings were a great success with great attendance. Thank you ever so much, Stewart, for coming down to the Maritimes and attending both.

The district convention held in New Brunswick was very well attended. It was held in Sussex . There was great discussion and there were a lot of resolutions. I was able to get to it. I did make for a late milking when I got home. I have somewhat patient cows.

The chairman of "the commission on the future of agriculture", a man named Rory Francais, delivered a synopsis of the commission's findings. He said "the government can't keep farmers in business if they can't get a fair price from the marketplace." I told him we could have told you that and saved the government some money. He then went on to say people don't want to buy any more food than they are all ready buying. We know people go hungry because of inequality in this world, so we booed him. He then said we were just a bunch of complainers and we had no solutions. We always suggested solutions all the way through his process; he just didn't like our solutions because orderly marketing is not a quick fix.

While in PEI, Stewart got to stay in downtown Metro Fernwood at "pleasant house" and he was put to work for an evening wearing rubber boots and coveralls. He fed cows, spread straw, and fed pigs. I make it a point to get these fancy executive types connected to the grass roots.

I made sure Stewart got a real good tour of the local potato warehouse, the rotten potato piles, and the problems the potato farmers are facing this year.

The government of PEI has decided it will not pursue federal disaster program money for the devastating losses in

storage that the potato and vegetable farmers suffered this year. This is completely outrageous.

This government is looking more and more incompetent each day. The general manager of the Albany beef plant came to tell us at the district convention about the direction he was taking the plant in. The Government had formed a management team to look at the plant and find a manager and get the plant on track to at least break even. This guy was hired to be here for the long haul. Less than a week after he told us how well everything was going and what a good future he could see for the plant, he quit and took off back to the mainland. Farmers are standing around scratching their heads and saying "What the hell?!"

The PEI government also sent a bureaucrat to the district convention to explain the new buffer zone legislation. The government snuck in a law on the last day of the last legislature that will take the use of 15 meters of land away from all farmers if it is by water or wetland. The purpose of this is to protect the rivers and bays from soil erosion and runoff.

NFU member Brendan Flood went aboard the bureaucrat and said all these government people want to do is put farmers out of business. The government man had to agree, the legislation was made by bureaucrats, lawyers, and politicians, with no input from the farmers.

This is not sitting well with the farm community at all and the new environment minister hadn't even read the file on it from what I could tell at a later meeting. I'm more convinced we are looking at a one term government.

I think Stewart was impressed and amused to see what we have to deal with and how we deal with them. Hope it was fun for you Stewart.

*Yer's in union,
Ranald MacFarlane*



ONE (New Brunswick)

REGION

- BY BETTY BROWN

Hopefully, we have seen the last of winter and now we appear to be in the mud season on my acreage.

We are pleased with our new NFU display backdrop and have used it three times, the last being at our Second Annual General Meeting, March 21st in Sussex.

We would like to extend a sincere thank you to NFU Women's Vice-President Joan Brady and NFU President Stewart Wells for speaking at our meeting. The district executive was voted back into office for the coming year.

The wrap up Agricultural Task Force meeting was held March 31st. The Minister will now appoint a Minister's Round Table on Agriculture to oversee the results of the six task force groups. Unfortunately, the implementation actions will be too late for several farmers who

are going out this year. Each year we lose more farmers, while more imported products land on our grocery shelves. All too soon we are becoming a third world country at the mercy of other countries for our food. The N.B. government preaches self-sufficiency, but doesn't follow through with food self-sufficiency.

The 2009 calves are arriving daily. Again we hope for good weather and growing season along with better financial returns. Best of luck planting your crops.

In Union, Betty Brown

NFU in New Brunswick Second Annual General Meeting

NFU in NB's second annual general meeting was held at the Fairway Inn, Sussex, March 21st. Guest speakers were NFU President Stewart Wells and NFU Women's Vice President Joan Brady.

Resolutions submitted included the need for a food security office; a team approach in improving soil; importance of prison farms; exemption of FLIP regarding land used for wind energy; splitting earning re Canada Pension; imported food labeling; public awareness of the current financial crisis facing farmers; membership dues; variety registration; N.B. Meat Inspection; and define cost of production.

The executive was re-elected for another year.



NFU District Meeting in Prince Edward Island.



REGION

THREE (Ontario)

- BY GRANT ROBERTSON

Like many of you I am having a hard time imagining an NFU without Ellard Powers. Ellard was my friend and he was the friend of many of us. He was someone who had earned the respect of so many through his thoughtful, dignified, but hard-nosed approach to issues. Ellard was in the forefront of my thoughts as Fred Tait and I traveled to Ottawa in early March to speak to the House of Commons Agriculture Committee on the NFU's groundbreaking livestock report. As Fred and I took on misinformation coming from the Conservative members of the Agriculture Committee, I couldn't shake the feeling Ellard was looking over my shoulder and whispering: "don't let them away with that." Ellard's passing is a sad affair for us as individuals and as an organization. He truly was a giant walking amongst us. Yet Ellard's legacy lives on, stronger now than ever.

Every time a young person gets up to speak about farming issues or social justice, Ellard's legacy is with us. Every time the NFU is called upon to provide blunt analysis of the problems facing family farmers, Ellard's legacy is with us. Every time the NFU puts forwards solutions to problems others have not even figured out yet, Ellard's legacy lives on.

Ellard's legacy also lives on in the growth and renewal the NFU is experiencing in Ontario. I am pleased to announce

that the NFU is once again experiencing real growth in numbers. For some of you this will be your first issue of the Union Farmer. Welcome. You have joined an organization that cares about your future and works hard every day to put the issues of family farmers forward.

The NFU in Ontario placed a flyer highlighting our cattle report and the organization itself into every farm mailbox in Ontario. There were a few hiccups, as with any endeavour of this size, but the flyer was universally well received. For other regions or districts that would like to borrow the computer file to use a template for your area, it is available for the asking.

The NFU has also been challenging the government on the loss of the deadstock subsidy that will further hit Ontario's livestock farmers in the pocketbook. As well, the NFU is examining the recently announced changes to the provincial sales tax, as we are concerned that this may have increased upfront costs for Ontario's farmers.

On any given day there are likely 50 different issues the NFU could be involved with. The Ontario Regional Council does its best to try and make sure we have a good balance on the issues we work on. While I often get the attention as the Ontario Coordinator that attention is often unwarranted. The real people who are working hard on your behalf all the time are Caitlin Hall, Kim Delaney, Murray Sharpe, Peter Dowling, Dave Lewington, Don Mills, Marion Watkins and Joan Brady, along with all the Local officials across the province. And we should never forget the work done by people like Presidents Stewart Wells, Colleen Ross and Nigel Smith and all the other National officials and staff. We have lost Ellard Powers, but the legacy he leaves us lives on in all the work our people are doing on behalf of family farmers.

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*In peace and solidarity,
Grant Robertson*



REGION

FIVE (Manitoba)

- BY FRED TAIT

Your humble servant of the Union has lately taken on the role of the man in the song titled "I've been everywhere man."

In a four-day period, beginning the second of February, our able Director of Research, Darrin Qualman and I conducted a total of six meetings with Manitoba cattle producers.

On February 11th and 12th, I participated in a North American Livestock and Trade Conference in Billings, Montana. This conference, sponsored by the Western Organization of Councils, was one of the best organized conferences I have ever had the pleasure of attending. Farmers from three countries – Mexico, United States and Canada – focused their attention on the common issues within the North American livestock industry that are destroying farmers' economic base. The presentations by farm leaders from Mexico were especially compelling. Their description of an agricultural society in disarray, resulting from the implementation of NAFTA and the resulting loss of tariff protection, was as vivid as it gets. The loss of millions of Mexican farmers, volatile food prices, loss of food security and the resulting food demonstrations are all a direct by-product of NAFTA. A growing portion of the Mexican population is being forced by deteriorating economic conditions into crime or illegal immigration into the USA by their basic human need to survive. It is ironic that the same champions of removing "trade barriers"

can also now justify the construction of a human barrier along the U.S.-Mexican border to stop the northward flow of refugees. Mainstream media offers up daily reports of the increasing violence in Mexico, but appears unwilling or unable to connect the dots between cause and effect.

On February 20th, I had the privilege of participating on a panel that was a part of the Winnipeg Food Charter. This event focused on local food and urban agriculture, and attracted hundreds of participants and visitors. Following two days of participation in this event, I am convinced that we are seeing the beginning of a new consumer-driven alternate food supply system with major implications for established corporate order.

Attention to failures of the corporate food system remains, and its legacy of disarray led me to Saskatoon to meet a four-person delegation from Natural Resources Canada, followed by NFU National Board and Executive meetings.

The next adventure was a March 3rd appearance before the Commons Agriculture Committee in Ottawa to present our Livestock Brief. From the line of questioning by Committee members representing the three Opposition Parties, it appeared that they were somewhat informed on the issues related to the crisis in the livestock industry. In contrast, Committee members from the government side of the House showed little attention to the report we had submitted or the value of your calf, and predictably addressed most of their attention to R-CALF.

Being a spokesperson for the National Farmers Union has never been an easy task. By example, we challenge an entrenched system that hides from the knowledge that captive supply of cattle exists for the purpose of depressing independent cattle producer returns. We do not hesitate to point out the fact that over the previous ten-year period, the growing concentration in the food processing and retailing industry has reduced the beef producers' share of the beef consumer's dollar from .24% to .16%.

(continued on page 26...)



REGION

SIX (Saskatchewan)

- BY GLENN TAIT

I have just had the very good fortune to be invited as a guest speaker to the Family Farm Defenders 2009 annual meeting in the very pretty area of Westby, Wisconsin. It was hosted in conjunction with the Valley Stewardship Network and Crawford Stewardship Project and themed around food sovereignty and, in particular, Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO's). I was asked to speak about how western Canadians use the single desk marketing power of the Canadian Wheat Board and, with a great deal of assistance from Jan Slomp and Randall Affleck, how supply management in the Canadian dairy industry works.

The area is called the "Driftless" region because, like our Cypress Hills, it wasn't ground flat and layered with overburden from glaciers. Roads often wind creekside through beautiful coulees, and on the flatter bits on higher ground the neat farmyards are so close to the pavement that you can often see the kitchen table. It is, as you might think, "cheese country", and the dairy barns are so close together that you could stand on almost any silo and hit the neighbor's roof with a pellet gun.

First on the agenda was an interesting tour of a local farm, a "permaculture" operation. It was a de-facto organic farm, but not registered as such because the very resourceful farmer's real goal was to make a living on his 110 acres with zero inputs. He has very nearly achieved that goal. Using little more than a few gallons of diesel he has a thriving business-producing apples, cider, hazel and chestnuts, a few garden crops, and automated inter-tree weed and pest control units (pigs).

The next day started with a panel of area farmers and environmentalists speaking about CAFOs and the level of potential (and current) pollution and public safety risks, such as nitrate and phosphate contamination of ground water, sulphur dioxide in

the air, and the rise of resistant types of bacteria in the food chain. One gentleman in the audience was himself a licensed CAFO operator and said by following the rules he was sure he was not a large part of the problem. He maintained that those operations just under the limit for CAFO registration were the ones that were seen spreading manure on snow and such. Opposition to CAFOs was steadfast but his point was well taken.

After the panel, retired economics professor John Ikerd from Missouri spoke about grassroots democracy and the real economy of the family farm with all the passion of a Baptist preacher. He was very well-received and answered many questions about how to employ the law to control the expansion of CAFOs. The rest of the day was taken up by breakout sessions on food sovereignty, public policy, and communications. It was a great experience in a wonderful place.

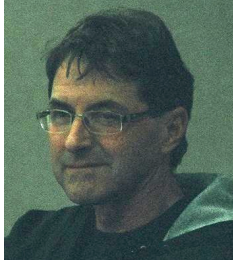
Not long after I got home the provincial government in Saskatchewan released its budget. It contained significant increases in funding for agricultural support programs and a very large cut in property taxes over the next three years. Saskatchewan's property-based school tax has been a sore point among farmers and ranchers for a long time. About ten years ago I calculated that the average farmer paid in my area about four times the school tax as the average resident in nearby North Battleford. It should be a lot closer to even by 2011. Analysts of this budget note that while spending is up 12%, the Sask Party government is confidently relying on currently laid-off potash miners to produce enough to supply 20% of total revenues – while simultaneously helping to maintain an estimated provincial growth rate 3 1/2 times bigger than that predicted by our chartered banks. What, Brad worry?

*In Union,
Glenn Tait*



REGION

SEVEN (Alberta)



- BY DOUG SCOTT

Greetings from region seven and welcome to a somewhat reluctant spring. This is the first opportunity I have had to make a contribution to the Union Farmer quarterly and I feel honored to do so. As I new Board member the last few months have been interesting ones for me as I become familiar with the workings of the NFU board and executive. The complexity and range of the issues the Board deals with has been quite an eye opener. The level of expertise and dedication that board members and employees bring to the table speaks highly of our membership. I can assure you that the interests of all Canadian farm families are well served by your organization. Currently we are working on a number of important issues.

Our report on *The Farm Crisis and the Cattle Sector* has been well received by both individuals and organizations. A number of meetings have been held throughout our regions that have highlighted the findings of our report. It is clear to all producers that something is not working properly in the cattle sector. For many producers a time when involvement in the beef business was both profitable and honorable has become a distant memory. Unfortunately it is difficult for many producers to break with what has become the norm in the cattle industry in the past twenty years. In Alberta speaking out publicly against failed government policy is not considered proper behavior. The NFU will continue to press for change. The release of our report must be considered a first step and we must continue to hold our government accountable for their failed leadership and demand that changes are made in this industry. We remain hopeful that the new US administration will soon address the issue of packer captive supply.

Bill 19 has become a hot topic in Alberta farm circles. In its current text the bill gives our government sweeping powers to place

restrictions on landowner property rights for indeterminate lengths of time. As you can imagine this does not sit well with landowners. At a series of meetings held across the province landowners have made the government aware of concerns they have with this bill. It remains to be seen what impact our very publically stated concerns will have on the final text of the bill.

Once again shortline railways have become a concern in our province. Over a number of years the Battle River Producer Car Group has developed a successful producer car program. A proposal by CN rail to abandon the Alliance line has put the program in jeopardy. The group has put forward a proposal to purchase the Alliance subdivision from CN Rail and operate it as a shortline railway. This proposal merits the support of farmers, the public and the Alberta government. The merits of shipping grain by rail cannot be overstated. There are currently eleven shortline railways operating in Saskatchewan. The Saskatchewan government has a program specifically designed to assist rural communities establish and maintain commercially viable shortline rail businesses. It's questionable whether they would have been able to get off the ground if the provincial government had not been there to get them started. The Alberta government should immediately establish a similar initiative, and provide concrete support to farmers and rural communities who are attempting to establish similar businesses. In 2008, the Battle River Producer Car Group shipped 600 cars which resulted in over 600 thousand dollars remaining in their communities which otherwise would have ended up in the hands of corporate agribusiness.

In my short tenure as a board member I have been amazed at the number of food groups who wish to partner with the NFU. As food trends change, more and more consumers become concerned about food safety and the sustainability of our current food system the importance of the NFU and its stand on food policy will continue to be enhanced. Without question the NFU is one of the most highly regarded farm organizations in Canada. In order to continue our important work increased membership is vital and I would encourage all of our members to assist us in our drive to increase our membership. There are many free riders who benefit from the hard work of our members.

A reminder to our members that we will be holding our annual convention on June 13 in Calmar. Details regarding the time and location will be forthcoming.

Wishing you all a successful farming season.

*In Union there is Strength,
Doug Scott*



EIGHT (B.C./Peace River)

REGION

- BY NEIL PEACOCK

Greetings from the Mighty Peace, February and March have brought interesting times for Peace River area farmers. Region 8 held an informal meeting to look at ways of raising money and strengthening the NFU presence in the region. In addition, NFU Coordinator Peter Eggers and I continued to make presentations of the livestock brief to various groups throughout the region. The report has been well received. The mood of farmers, however, ranged from depression, hopelessness and helplessness. There seemed to be a general consensus among the ranchers that the 16 points of the brief are correct for turning the industry around. Another key comment was that ranchers are looking for leadership. They seem to be looking to the NFU to be the leader. They do not seem to believe that the Canadian Cattlemen's Association (CCA) or Alberta Beef Producers (ABP) is providing the correct leadership, and they also questioned the provincial and federal agricultural ministries' wisdom to act on the issues - if they were even willing to. More meetings are scheduled for April. Municipal governments - which are feeling the devastating effects of the low prices and low farm incomes in their communities - are getting involved and arranging the meetings for us. They have seen the value of the NFU report and they want to make sure many farmers have the ability to hear and see the report.

There are a lot of initiatives taking place in Alberta with respect to agriculture - but very little of it bodes well for farmers. The Alberta Livestock Strategy / Farm Recovery Plan is not being met with overwhelming support. Specifically, farmers are concerned about the "Premise Identification" Program, particularly

when this program is coupled with the "Age Verification or Birth" registry.

In Alberta now, if you own, raise or sell livestock, you require a number. Without that number, you cannot market livestock and you are not to possess them. In this program, all owners of livestock are required to register their premises with the province and report to the province all species and number of species held on the farm. This includes all livestock with the exception of dogs and cats. Included in this program are horses, chickens, ducks, pheasants, elk, bison, deer, cattle, pigs, goats and sheep. At this point I believe only calves have to be registered at birth. Anyone who refuses to sign up for this program will not receive any aid money and will be subject to fines or imprisonment if the fines are not paid. The Alberta Government is so excited about the wonderfulness of this plan they have been lobbying the federal government to make this program mandatory across Canada.

Commercial haulers have to be trained on how to haul livestock now. At this point, farmers are exempt unless you haul a neighbors' livestock. Changes have also been made on livestock manifests. You are supposed to include your Premise ID number, as well as your trailer license number, on the manifest. In addition to the manifest, you are also required to get a permit from ALIS before you can move animals from an auction mart or across provincial lines. CCIA dangle tags will no longer be allowed effective January 1, 2010.

Region 8 has been fielding numerous requests for the NFU to, quote, "Do something about this". In a capacity separate from my role as an NFU board member, I have started a petition, getting farmers to sign, to be presented to the provincial Legislature. If any others in Alberta are interested in getting a copy of the petition against Premise ID and mandatory age verification they can contact me.

Now, if this wasn't enough, the Alberta Government has put forward Bill 19. Bill 19 undermines property rights of property owners in the province. Property can be seized or put on hold indefinitely without any reimbursement to the landowner. It also takes away the ability of landowners to refuse development on their property. All this makes one wonder whether the Alberta Government is Draconian, Orwellian or just plain absurd? Democracy appears to only happen for a thirty day period every four years.

(continued on page 26...)



Tribute to Ellard Powers

- BY BARRY ROBINSON

Ellard Powers passed away February 28, 2009. A founding member of the NFU, Ellard Powers also served as First Vice-President of the Ontario Farmers Union, and played a key role in organizing the supply-management system for dairy in Canada.

Barry Robinson is a former NFU National Board member and a neighbour of Ellard Powers in the community of Beachburg, Ontario. This tribute was read at Ellard Powers' funeral service in early March, 2009.



Ellard Powers at an NFU meeting on the cattle crisis in February, 2009.

I would like to share with you some of my wonderful recollections of Ellard Powers. Of course, I have known Ellard all of my life, but I would say that my relationship began with a phone call. In the early 1980s, Ellard called me to see if I wanted to go to Ottawa for a lobby. My first thought was: "What is a lobby?" Oh, I was familiar with those grand rooms inside the front door of a hotel but this was something different. For some reason, I agreed, and was soon to find out that a lobby in this case was actually a series of meetings between groups of 2 people and a number of MPs. I was paired up with Jean Leahy, a wonderful woman from the Peace River area of BC. From that day forward I was intrigued with the issues and insights that Ellard shared with me during many trips to meetings.

So who was Ellard Powers? He was a husband, father, grandfather, farmer, life coach, politician, student, leader, teacher, philosopher, financial advisor, and friend. He took seriously each of these roles.

Family was very important to him and although he was away a lot, he truly valued quality time at home. To Ellard, Gladys was a wife, a true friend that was there for him to talk to about their dreams, to cry with when times got tough, to laugh with when all was well. She was that secure link that was so important in keeping the family together, in assuring the success of the farm and being there for him personally.

Oh yes, and to help make lunch for that next meeting. She made possible the work that he did and loved. The girls! Ellard always had time for his children, whether it was to celebrate the latest

milestone in their life or whether dad was needed for some advice. He was very proud of them and often talked about their accomplishments and adventures. I didn't mind listening. There were some really interesting stories there. What a great relationship he had with his grandchildren. He often received a phone call from one of them looking for advice and it could even be two or three of them in one day. Obviously his openness and non-judgmental approach served them well. He thoroughly enjoyed their lives and playing a role in their future, even giving several of them the opportunity to be a farmer or at least gain that experience. Apparently some of them even mentioned to their friends that they had a financial advisor - a pretty impressive concept for a young person. Grandpa again provided that sound advice.

Some of you may remember Keitha McKay who was one of Ellard's primary school teachers. She once said, when speaking about Ellard, that he was one of her best students ever. He had a real thirst for knowledge and often listened in to what the older students were doing. Well, his thirst never diminished. He always was reading and grasping for more information on whatever issue he was addressing at the moment. He remained a student throughout his life. Ellard took difficult policy, legislation, and world trade situations and put them in language his students could understand.

Picture Ellard as a teacher in a one-room school. Instead of you moving from grade to grade and teacher to teacher, you would have Ellard moving you to the next level, instilling in you that thirst for knowledge. He taught history; the history of the

(continued on page 15...)



farm movement, political history and community history. He taught math. When fighting for improvements for farmers, you always want immediate cash infusions, but does the math work in the long run? It's always easier to take a short term approach, but a vision, such as Ellard had, means that you need to be conscious of the long-term effect. He taught civics; the study of citizenship and government. He believed quite strongly that we, as citizens, have an important role to play in shaping the future of our communities and the world around us. I would suggest that part of his course was the teaching of respect. We may disagree with people that we make presentations to, or that we meet in life's journey, but in the end we need to respect them. He taught writing; how to write a brief, a presentation to a board or agency or a press release. I am proud to have been one of his students.

Ellard took on leadership roles within the church and had a deep personal faith, a faith that he expressed through the use of his many talents and a faith that led him to act on the injustices which he identified over the years. He was a farmer and loved the land, livestock and crops as well as the business of farming, but he recognized early on that farmers deserved better. However, he believed that they needed more muscle and a stronger voice, and so he joined the Ontario Farmers Union over 50 years ago, and soon became 1st Vice-President of the provincial organization. He fought hard during the 1960s to bring about change; from 1967 to 1970, he was a member of the Consultative Committee to the Canadian Dairy Commission. From 1969-1970 he was a member of the Ontario Milk Marketing Board, and in 1970 he was appointed as a commissioner to the Canadian Dairy Commission, a position he held until 1973 when he was appointed as the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer. This was not always an easy job, and Ellard enjoyed telling the story of one phone call he received from a dairy farmer and his wife in this area (the Ottawa Valley). Quotas had been cut and the farmers were not happy, and this couple let Ellard know in no uncertain terms that the decision he had made was not one that they agreed with. They became good friends in the years to come. Following his time with the Dairy Commission, Ellard soon became very active within the National Farmers Union again, providing leadership on many committees and new initiatives.

A politician is "someone involved in influencing public decision-making." I've heard other definitions for politicians as well. Ellard was a politician and loved politics. He even enjoyed going to meetings. He worked tirelessly to make a difference and although he obviously took on administrative duties, his real passion seemed to be in the area of policy development because policy needed to change in order to bring about improvement. When he was vice-chair of the Ontario Crop Insurance Commission, it was about putting together a better system for farmers. As a member of the Canadian Agricultural Research Council, he worked to insure that research was being done for the benefit of farmers. He was on the Advisory Board of the Council of Canadians for a few years, with such people as Doris Anderson, Pierre Berton, Farley Mowat, Lois Wilson and many others. Again, he wanted to influence public policy through progressive change.

In spite of the many accomplishments during his lifetime, Ellard would insist that the attention belonged to the issues that he was working on, or to the people affected by those issues. Quite simply, Ellard remained humble and soft-spoken, very approachable and accommodating. However, when it was time for a decision or to move forward on policy, he could be forceful and firm. Remember, he had thoroughly researched the facts, and consulted with others, so he knew that the final decision was very defensible.

Ellard faced many health-related obstacles in his life. But they were just that, an obstacle to be overcome, because beyond that there was more life to be lived, more fun to be had, more work to be done.

I am very thankful to Ellard Powers for the many lessons that he taught me over the years, for the encouragement and for the courage that he gave me to tackle new challenges and accept new opportunities.

I talked earlier about Ellard's love for his family and the pride in them that he had. Well, his values have been passed on and instilled in them. We sometimes ask ourselves what our legacy will be. Part of Ellard's legacy is his family that he is sharing with us.

Thank you Ellard!

—nfu—



Ontario budget missed opportunity, says NFU

The Ontario provincial budget fell short of delivering necessary economic measures for farm families and rural communities across the province, says Grant Robertson, Ontario Coordinator of the National Farmers Union (NFU).

He said there are a number of unanswered questions regarding harmonization of the provincial sales tax with the GST to create a harmonized sales tax (HST). “Families, no matter where they live, will be hit by the harmonization of the two taxes,” he stated. “Farm families that are already struggling due to the meltdown in the farm economy that preceded the manufacturing job losses will have this additional burden placed on them. A small rebate of taxpayers’ own money will not make up for the bigger bite taken out at the cash register.”

Robertson explained that farmers currently receive an exemption from the Ontario PST for farm business purchases by showing their farm business registration (FBR) number listed on their NFU membership card, and signing the receipt. It is unclear at this point if the new tax regime will require farmers to pay the HST up front, then apply for the PST portion in the form of a rebate after filling out a series of forms. This is currently the requirement for farmers to obtain GST rebates for their businesses, a process which can take up to three months.

“If farmers must now pay the PST up front, that will take money directly out of their pockets at the point of sale, and add to the administrative costs using taxpayers’ dollars,” he said. “The massive deficit projected in this budget also means that there is little or no likelihood of investments in agricultural

programs or rural infrastructure.” The budget calls on cash-strapped municipalities in rural areas to pay one-third of infrastructure costs, a stipulation that Robertson says means that many needed projects in rural Ontario will remain undone.

Robertson characterized the budget as a “missed opportunity”, saying the government does not seem to appreciate the critical situation facing rural Ontario. “It seems the government doesn’t understand how we got into the mess we are in, so they are doing the same things over again, expecting different results. Instead of giveaways to corporations, with not a single guarantee of retaining jobs, or a single string attached, the McGuinty government should have implemented a program to reward family farmers who provide environmental goods and services. These are investments that would have paid immediate dividends in our economy by creating local jobs, spurring economic activity, helping to create a greener environment, and protecting our precious water resources.”

He concluded the one positive note in the budget is the promise that the Province will institute clearer ‘Ontario Food’ definitions. “This would be welcome news to the NFU, which has long advocated higher levels of Ontario product available in our grocery stores,” stated Robertson. “However, it will take a lot of work and commitment from this government to turn this phrase from empty rhetoric to meaningful change.”

—nfu—



NFU posts challenge to Canadian Cattlemen's Association

The National Farmers Union recently posted the following notice and challenge on its website at www.nfu.ca:

“Where’s the beef...plan?”

The Canadian Cattlemen’s Association has published a response to the NFU cattle report. We invite you to read both the NFU report and the CCA response, and decide for yourself which offers the most penetrating and reliable analysis. Go to the CCA website and its response document.
<http://www.cattle.ca/CCA%20responds%20to%20NFU%20report.pdf>.

In the interests of helping farmers/ranchers make informed decisions, the NFU also challenges the Canadian Cattlemen’s Association

to provide a link on its website to the NFU cattle report.”

“We think it is vital that everyone start working in the interests of Canada’s livestock producers—especially our cow-calf operators,” said NFU President Stewart Wells, “and we think that directing people to the CCA’s website response may help focus attention on the many problems.”

“We are challenging the CCA to reciprocate, and provide a link on their website to the NFU cattle brief, available at <http://www.nfu.ca/briefs/2008/LivestockEXECSUMFINAL.pdf> - as we say on the notice “In the interests of helping farmers/ranchers make informed decisions.”

—nfu—

March 11, 2009

An open letter to the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association

Dear Editor,

A recent letter from the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association (MCPA) to a National Farmers Union (NFU) member who had requested a refund of her MCPA check-off went to great lengths to fabricate a fictitious partnership between the NFU and R-CALF.

Based upon previous experience related to MCPA attacks upon the Manitoba Cattle Enhancement check-off, and the MCPA’s back-door opposition to the Rancher’s Choice initiative, I would contend that MCPA’s false allegations linking the NFU to R-CALF is nothing other than a thinly-veiled attempt by MCPA to divert cattle producers’ attention away from the NFU report entitled: The Farm Crisis and the Cattle Sector (available online at www.nfu.ca).

To its credit, the Canadian Cattlemen’s Association (CCA) has published a response to the NFU report. The NFU website makes a link to the CCA response. The NFU has urged the CCA to provide a link from their website to the NFU report.

I would challenge MCPA to use its generous budget of check-off dollars to complete and publish a detailed response to the NFU analysis, and make arrangements for their 2009 annual convention to host a two-hour panel that focuses on the two reports. Participation on the panel would be restricted to the Research Directors of the NFU and MCPA and one elected director each from the NFU and MCPA.

Any effort by MCPA to ignore this challenge will demonstrate a willingness on their part to maintain the status quo at any cost to individual producers and the truth.

Yours truly,
 Fred Tait, NFU Manitoba Coordinator
 Rossendale, Manitoba



Merger of beef packers will lead to higher retail prices

The decision by the federal Competition Bureau to facilitate a merger between Lakeside (Tyson) and XL Foods will lead to higher meat prices at the retail level and lower prices at the farm gate.

National Farmers Union Manitoba Coordinator Fred Tait says the merger now leaves only two companies – Cargill and XL – in control of virtually the entire beef packing capacity in Canada. “Cattle farmers are already struggling with record low prices,” he said. “This will only make the situation worse.”

Tait said with only two companies controlling the market, there will neither be competition nor regulation in the marketplace, and that will lead to predictable outcomes which are bad for producers and consumers.

“The Competition Bureau has become a joke,” he said. “It is more appropriate to call it the Consolidation Bureau. This decision allows XL to attain a 48% market share of the beef packing industry in Canada, as well as acquiring auction

markets, cattle finance companies and cattle insurance companies. It already had control over virtually all the largest auction markets in Saskatchewan, and this merger strengthens its captive supply of cattle going into its plants.”

Tait said the cattle marketing system has become a full-fledged “command and control” operation that will operate solely for the benefit of the two big companies. “The current Canadian government has long expressed the opinion that we should deregulate the market and replace regulation with competition. But it now appears they have abandoned competition altogether. Farmers are left exposed and under the thumbs of these two companies that will dictate the market.”

He concluded that in 2005, the federal Competition Bureau allowed Cargill to buy out Better Beef, which was a large Ontario beef packing company. The result of that merger is that cattle prices in Ontario are the lowest in the country. “Now western farmers can expect to see the same thing, and consumers can expect to see higher retail prices.” —nfu—

New book released on growing potatoes organically

Canadian Organic Growers (COG) recently launched the second book in its Practical Skills series of technical manuals for organic agriculture, “Growing Potatoes Organically from market garden to field crop.” The book and the series continue COG’s commitment and success in educating organic and transitioning growers. The organic growing principles in this book are applicable anywhere in the world that potatoes are grown. While the varieties available to you locally may differ, the methods are the same. The stories of ten successful farms in Growing Potatoes Organically are inspiration for the success that can be achieved in the field.

Maureen Bostock is an organic farmer and author of Growing Potatoes Organically. Conventional potato farming employs a vast range of chemicals for fertility, weed, pest and disease control, top-kill, and prevention of sprouting in storage. Bostock details how organic potato farmers have addressed most of these issues and eliminated the factors in potato production that contribute to chemical dependency. Crop rotation, organic inputs and strict cull pile sanitation have raised organic potato production to within 85% of conventional yields.

Organic farming supports a healthy ecosystem. Lower input costs for chemical pesticides and herbicides, combined with higher prices for their products, often lead to a greater net return for farmers, as well as a healthier work and living environment, and soils that nourish all the crops on the farm.

Ten organic potato growers across Canada are profiled in the handbook. Marv Dyck of Manitoba says “the most important principle of organic farming is to keep the crop vibrant.” Dan Vriend of Alberta believes that when transitioning from chemical-based agriculture, it takes five years for the earth to heal itself and for yields to develop. The research and on-farm experience described in Growing Potatoes organically will help you make your transition successfully, with an overview of organic potato production methods, organic strategies for dealing with pests and diseases, crop rotation, fertility, and seed potato production.

Information on the book is available from Canadian organic Growers on the web at www.cog.ca/practicalskillshandbooks.htm#Potatoes or by phone at 1-888-375-7383.



Changes needed to Employment Insurance Program

The majority of Canada's family farms are forced to rely on off-farm income and debt financing to survive in a marketplace dominated by a small number of multinational agribusiness corporations. The decline in average farm income over the past two decades has forced increasing numbers of women to turn to off-farm jobs in rural communities in an attempt to make ends meet.

But many rural workers – particularly women – are never able to access benefits from the Employment Insurance (EI) program, even though they must pay into it, says Joan Brady, Women's Vice-President of the National Farmers Union (NFU).

In a presentation to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women in Ottawa March 24, Brady said the ultimate goal of farm families is to make a living from their farm operation. Even though Canadian farmers are among the most productive and efficient sectors of the economy, their net incomes have declined because they are squeezed by large multinational corporations which control inputs, processing and distribution of agricultural commodities. The NFU promotes policies which are designed to raise net farm incomes by restoring market power to family farms.

Farmers should not have to rely on off-farm income to survive, stated Brady. "Ideally, our farms should be our 'employment insurance'. There is always more than enough work to be done on a farm – and the farm operation itself should be a source of rewarding employment for those of us who commit our lives to the production of healthy, wholesome, safe food for our fellow Canadians."

"The reality is that dependence on debt and off-farm income is a fact of life for virtually all farmers in Canada," Brady told the committee. "In many farm families it is the woman that works off the farm to shore up farm income and provide for the family's needs. However, the EI program requires that an applicant's claim be based on gross farm income, rather than net farm income. This could easily stand in the way of their EI benefits and quite possibly

maternity benefits. Since the changes to Employment Insurance in 1997 that doubled the required hours from the previous system, many women, who are more likely to work part-time, have been ineligible for benefits, job training and educational opportunities."

Brady cited figures from Statistics Canada which showed that farm debt has nearly tripled from \$18.3 billion in 1981 to \$54.3 billion in 2007. In addition, small and medium-size farms rely on off-farm income for approximately 90% of their total income, while large farms depend on off-farm income for over half (52.1%) of their total income. Even the country's largest farms, with gross revenues over \$500,000 annually, depend on off-farm income for between 25.9% and 33.5% of their total income.

Brady, who farms with her husband and family near Dashwood, Ontario, said the farm income crisis is evident across the country. She cited her observations during a recent visit to Nova Scotia's Annapolis Valley. "I spent a number of years working on farms in that area," she told the Committee. "Valley agriculture is currently in crisis as packing plants have been closed and the farmers who had supplied them are being forced out of business. My friends, who have grown apples for 40 years, have gone into receivership and have had to terminate their daughter's employment. There is a possibility that she will not be eligible for EI as they are required to prove that they are dealing with one another at arm's length. They are devastated. They have lost their business, their occupation and possibly their home and have to face the knowledge that one of their employees will not be treated equally by virtue of her relationship with them. Because my friends are self-employed, they are not eligible for EI benefits or the related job training."

In her presentation to the Committee, the NFU Women's Vice-President recommended:

1. The federal government restore the \$54 billion cumulative surplus in the EI account to the EI program;

(continued on page 27...)



Farmers' liability a growing concern due to deregulation

Farmers in Manitoba and across Canada are being forced to bear greater liability as a result of deregulation of the grain industry, says Fred Tait, Manitoba Coordinator of the National Farmers Union (NFU).

In a presentation to the Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation (MASC) in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, March 4, Tait and fellow NFU Board Member for Manitoba, Bev Stow, said regulatory and legislative changes to the *Canada Grain Act* and the Canadian Grain Commission (CGC) mean that farmers can no longer assume they are protected from potential lawsuits when errors or accidental misrepresentations occur in the bulk grain handling system. In the long-term, the increased liability for farmers will have serious implications for provincial crop insurance agencies like MASC.

"The accelerating introduction of this new regulatory regime means that farmers will face situations that are not necessarily covered under normal crop insurance circumstances," stated Tait. "For example, if a farmer takes out crop insurance under MASC and then applies for assistance, only to discover that his grain is not a registered variety, what happens then?"

Tait said Bill C-13, introduced in the House of Commons by the Harper government earlier this spring, would eliminate licensing and bonding requirements for grain companies, and also eliminate mandatory inward inspection and weighing of grain. "If a farmer suffers a severe financial loss due to an unlicensed grain company declaring bankruptcy, what policies – if any – would MASC implement to insure farmers against such an occurrence?" he asked.

Tait said the CGC announced in February it is reducing farmers' access to on-site inspection services, including the CGC facility in Brandon, Manitoba. "The loss of access to inspection services, and the resulting loss of legal protection afforded farmers by the CGC inspection certificates, are

issues that must be addressed by the MASC," he said. "Many farmers will be unaware of the correct procedures needed to retain official samples of their grain deliveries, and may be held liable for unintentional contamination of grain shipments."

The elimination of the Kernel Visual Distinguishability (KVD) system last August by the federal government created a situation where the onus is now on farmers to prove the identity of the grain variety they deliver to their local elevator, Tait explained. "The loss of the KVD system means that producers will likely be held liable for unknowingly misrepresenting a variety that may eventually contaminate a shipment. The only protection farmers may have under this scenario is to ensure they retain a sample obtained on their farm by a licensed inspector. Farmers may also be at risk financially if they buy a variety that is misrepresented by a seller, and consequently suffer lower yield and/or quality."

"Identity-preserved systems are not infallible, and in fact are likely to seriously impair Canada's ability to maintain quality standards," stated Tait. "In the absence of any proven alternative system capable of guaranteeing Canada's grain quality standards, the NFU believes the KVD system for variety identification must be immediately reinstated."

Tait also requested that MASC undertake a study to determine potential correlations between soil erosion and the removal of shelterbelts and tree cover. "While farmers clearly tend to bear the direct costs of this loss of valuable topsoil in the near term, the long-term costs are more difficult to measure. The total cost of soil erosion is ultimately paid by all ratepayers." He said if a correlation is determined, crop insurance premiums should be adjusted to reflect the individual policy holder's efforts to limit the risk of soil erosion as evidenced by their decision to remove or retain shelterbelts and tree cover.

—nfu—



Canada Grain Act amendments undermine farmer protection

Legislative amendments to the Canada Grain Act introduced in the House of Commons earlier this spring will “turn back the clock” by removing fundamental protections for farmers, says Stewart Wells, President of the National Farmers Union (NFU).

Bill C-13, An Act to amend the Canada Grain Act, is virtually identical to Bill C-39, which was introduced in December 2007 by the Conservative Government. Bill C-39 died on the order paper when the last federal election was called.

“This legislation, like its predecessor, fundamentally changes the mandate of the Canadian Grain Commission (CGC),” stated Wells. “It removes the requirement that the CGC operate as a public interest watchdog that regulates the overall grain industry ‘in the interests of producers’. Instead, it changes the CGC’s role to become a passive service provider that provides grading, weighing and inspection services to grain companies on a fee-for-service basis. Farmers’ protections will be reduced to a minimum, with plenty of loopholes for companies to circumvent those limited protections.”

Bill C-13 proposes eliminating inward inspection of grain, which would severely undermine the ability of the CGC to maintain Canada’s existing high quality standards. The current system allows grain inspectors to catch contaminated, off-condition or incorrectly-represented carloads while they are being emptied, weighed and elevated, and before they are mixed with large quantities of other grain. Eliminating this provision will have a negative effect on farmers’ bottom line.

The danger posed by the relaxation of inspection standards will be further aggravated by the elimination of the Kernel Visual Distinguishability (KVD) system in August, 2008, he stated. The KVD system, which was unique to Canada, ensured that unregistered varieties of grains were prevented from contaminating export shipments. No reliable mechanism is yet in place to replace the KVD system.

UPDATE ON BILL C-13: HOIST MOTION IN PARLIAMENT

In early April, a “hoist” motion, designed to put Bill C-13 “on ice” for six months, was spearheaded by the NDP and supported by the Liberals and the Bloc Québécois MPs. The MPs’ support for the “hoist” motion was a direct result of a flood of phone calls, e-mails and faxes from farmers. Although no vote was taken on the “hoist” motion as of press deadline (April 3), it did remove Bill C-13 from the Parliamentary Order Paper for the time being.

Bill C-13 also proposes to eliminate security as a requirement for licensing of grain companies. Wells said this will actually reduce competition because farmers will be more likely to sell their grain to a larger, established company rather than risk dealing with a small, independent broker. “The security provisions were put in place to protect farmers, who would be left holding the bag if the grain company goes bankrupt,” he explained. “Eliminating this requirement will not save farmers any money. It will only increase their risk.”

Wells said farmers did not call for any change to the Canada Grain Act. “The pressure to restructure the CGC and reduce its regulatory role has been coming from grain companies,” he noted. “At a time when grain companies like Viterra, ADM and Cargill are consolidating their hold over the market, it is obvious there needs to be a mechanism in place to provide farmers with protection.”

The NFU President concluded the Harper Government appears intent on “turning back the clock to the 1800s, when there was no Canadian Grain Commission, no Canadian Wheat Board, no public research, no fairness, no equity, no justice and no market power for farmers.”

—nfu—



Closure of prison farms a short-sighted move

The federal government's announcement that it intends to close six prison farms operated by the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) is a short-sighted move, says the President of the National Farmers Union (NFU).

In a letter to Hon. Peter Van Loan, federal Minister of Public Safety, Stewart Wells said the decision appears to be based on potential short-term financial gains from the sale of real estate. He noted a consultant's report in 2007 indicated the government could likely gain \$2 million from the sale of two prison farm facilities near Kingston, Ontario.

The CSC and Minister Van Loan claim the prison farms no longer provide employable skills training to inmates because the number of farms in Canada has declined.

Wells said this attitude by the government wrongly implies that farming does not require a

considerable amount of skill and professionalism, and also suggests that farming and food production itself is an outmoded and irrelevant activity. Both suggestions are completely false.

"The government appears to have written off agriculture as a fundamental cornerstone of the Canadian economy," he stated.

Wells said rather than close the institutions and exacerbate the overcrowding and gang-related problems in the regular prison system, the CSC should expand and enhance the prison farms as a constructive alternative. Not only do the inmates gain technical and social skills from this program, the prison farms also contribute a considerable quantity of locally-grown food to the institution. The loss of this locally-sourced food will increase the financial burden on taxpayers.

—nfu—

OUR BOARD OUR BUSINESS

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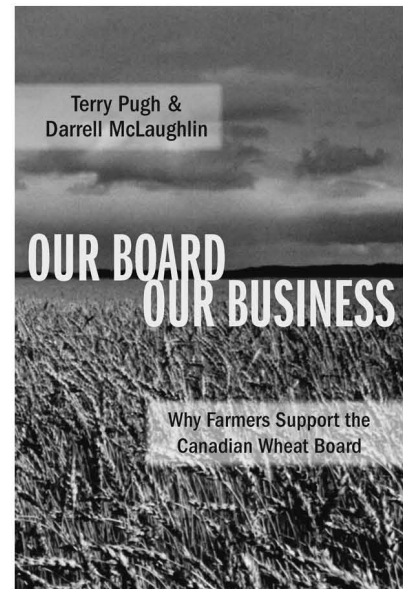
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The central purpose of this book is to help farmers and non-farmers better understand the essential role of the Canadian Wheat Board in the lives of western grain producers and their communities, and the Canadian economy. The need for such an understanding has been made all the more urgent by Prime Minister Harper's neo-liberal open market agenda which will guarantee corporate domination of Canadian grains. This book, sets out the context, operational mechanism and role of the CWB, making the case for its economic, social and political value.



Saskatchewan budget lays out optimistic projections



The Saskatchewan government's budget lays out increases in spending for agriculture, infrastructure, education and health. But those spending increases appear to be based on very optimistic predictions for royalty revenues from potash and other resource commodities.

The provincial government predicts a growth rate 3.5 times higher than that projected by the country's major chartered banks. Potash buyers may have difficulty sourcing credit for purchases.

The budget's projected decline in oil revenues from \$1.5 billion to \$573 million is a reminder that commodity prices are in sharp decline, and there is no guarantee they will recover, says Glenn Tait, Saskatchewan Coordinator of the NFU. That could translate into problems down the road, he added.

Tait said the provincial government's decision to shift a greater percentage of responsibility for education funding from property taxes is welcome. The Province will now pay for 63 percent of total pre-Kindergarten to Grade 12 education operating costs, compared to 51 percent last year. He said the province-wide uniform mill rate was somewhat surprising, given that the redistribution of boundaries for school divisions four years ago already had the effect of nearly equalizing mill rates between school divisions.

He also said the 58 percent increase in funding for the Ministry of Agriculture's budget is welcome, but questioned whether the bulk of that funding should go to federal-provincial programs that have not been successful in the past. "They're spending more, but perhaps they should be spending more wisely," he stated.

Tait said the long-term answer for farmers is to take control of their industry and increase their market power, so they can increase their net income from the marketplace. The NFU works to empower farmers by fighting to reduce corporate control of the beef sector and increasing public sector research for grains.

"Agri-Invest and Agri-Stability are basically a recycled CAIS program, and they're paying out even less to farmers than CAIS did," Tait said. "Cattle producers are suffering serious income shortfalls, but they won't be able to count on those programs to provide much in the way of assistance."

He noted the budget contains a number of positive spending initiatives, including those for rural infrastructure initiatives, health care and seniors' income support.

—nfu—

Celebrating 40 Years!

NFU 40th Annual Convention

November 26th to 28th, 2009

Ottawa, Ontario

See back page for hotel details...



New Brunswick potato farmers win victory in Supreme Court

The Supreme Court of Canada has ruled the federal government must provide a financial settlement to 180 New Brunswick potato farmers who were hurt by the federal government's mishandling of a potato disease outbreak in the early 1990s.

The decision, released February 19 in Ottawa, is a victory for farmers who have been fighting for justice for nearly two decades. The federal government had appealed to the Supreme Court in an effort to overturn a September 18, 2008, New Brunswick Court of Appeal decision, which held the federal government liable for millions of dollars in damages suffered by the farmers. The federal government must now negotiate a fair settlement with the farmers. If a negotiated deal is not reached, the government must pay a financial package which will be determined by the court.

The National Farmers Union (NFU) in New Brunswick played a key role in helping farmers organize to pursue the court action, beginning in the early 1990s. Kevin Arsenault of Prince Edward Island also worked tirelessly on farmers' behalf on this issue for nearly twenty years, first with the NFU, and later on his own. But it was the farmers themselves, who organized a group known as the "PVYn Affected Growers Inc.", which deserve tremendous credit for sticking together and following through till the end, stated Betty Brown, NFU National Board member for New Brunswick. She noted, however, that there is still considerable work to be done before the farmers see any money in their pockets.

John Friel, QC, McInnes Cooper, who served as legal counsel to the growers for 14 years, said

he is happy with the result, and optimistic that the government will be forthcoming with a payment that could amount to many millions of dollars. But the government has been uncooperative from the beginning, he cautioned. "The important thing is that this has been an ongoing battle between the potato growers and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) for the past 18 years. It's been a battle every step of the way."

Friel explained that although the CFIA did not exist at the time the incident took place in 1991, it was named in the action because its predecessor, the federal Department of Agriculture's Food Production and



**John Friel, QC,
McInnes Cooper**

Inspection Division, was responsible for the negligence which cost farmers many millions of dollars in damages as a result of the government's failure to conduct a meaningful investigation of PVYn it had detected in 1989. The New Brunswick Court of Appeal had found that this failure resulted in the import of PVYn infested seed potatoes into New Brunswick in the spring of 1990 and introduced a quarantine pest into the province.

Gailen Allan, a member of the National Farmers Union in New Brunswick and an original member of the PVYn Affected Potato Growers Inc, said the Supreme Court decision was "great news" that he's been waiting to hear for nearly two decades.

—nfu—



Alberta railway shortline proposal merits support

A proposal put forward by the Battle River Producer Car Group (BRPCG) to purchase the Alliance subdivision from CN Rail and operate it as a shortline railway merits the support of farmers, the public and the Alberta government, according to the National Farmers Union (NFU).

Doug Scott, NFU National Board member for Alberta, said it is important that the rail line be retained. The cost savings to farmers are significant when they are able to load producer cars on a rail line that services their home communities. The province's taxpayers also benefit because of reduced road maintenance costs since there are fewer semi-trailer trucks hauling grain to centralized high-throughput terminals. Rail is also the most energy-efficient means of bulk grain transportation over long distances.

Scott pointed out that there are many successful shortline railways operating in the neighbouring province of Saskatchewan. He added that the Saskatchewan government has a program specifically designed to assist rural communities establish and maintain commercially-viable shortline rail businesses. "The Alberta government should immediately establish a similar initiative, and provide concrete support to farmers and rural communities who are working to prevent the loss of their rail lines.

The CN Alliance subdivision was put up for tender in late November, 2008. So far, the BRPCG is the only organization that has put forward an offer on the rail line, which connects with the CN main line at Camrose, Alberta. The Alliance subdivision runs southeast from Camrose through the towns of Kelsey, Rosalind, Heisler, Forestburg, Galahad and Alliance. The BRPCG has successfully shipped grain producer cars on the line for many years, saving farmers hundreds of thousands of dollars annually in costs. In 2008, the BRPCG shipped 600 cars.

Communities along the affected line have expressed support for the BRPCG proposal for a shortline railway. A public meeting was held in Forestburg on February 9, 2009 where Paul Beingessner, a director of the Southern Rails Co-op shortline railway in Saskatchewan, explained how that line has been operating successfully for more than 20 years.

The BRPCG is currently in negotiations with CN Rail. "It's important that the Alberta government provide concrete and meaningful support to this specific effort, and also set up a program similar to that which exists in Saskatchewan to ensure that communities are able to establish commercially-viable shortline railways," stated Scott. "In Saskatchewan, there are currently 11 shortlines in operation."

—nfu—

Farmers of North America Membership

Farmers of North America (FNA) is a membership-based organization that helps farmers save money on inputs.

The NFU and FNA have come to an agreement whereby NFU members can enjoy a \$150 discount on an FNA membership. A regular-priced FNA membership costs \$625 per year (plus taxes). NFU members can join FNA for a wholesale price of \$475 (plus taxes), **but special conditions apply**. In order to get the \$475 wholesale rate on an FNA membership, **you must be a current, paid up NFU member and you must sign up through the NFU**.

If you have questions about the FNA, you can request information from the NFU office. **If you have detailed questions, visit the FNA website www.fna.ca or call them directly: (306) 665-2294 or 1-877-362-3276.**

To take advantage of the discounted FNA membership rate, phone the NFU. We can take your information over the phone. **To access the reduced rate, call:** National Farmers Union Office at (306) 652-9465. (Have your credit card handy). **Remember, to save on your FNA membership, you must purchase it through the National Farmers Union.**



Improving Farm Profitability



(Message from the Women's President, from page 4)

and interestingly, many, if not most, CRAFT mentors are NFU members.

This new kind of agriculture is "place-based", local, more ecological, highly-complex and focused on a face to face relationship between farmers and our customers. It will likely continue to see women at the centre. This is a new, but at the same time, a very old kind of food production/consumption system that makes a lot of sense and that women naturally understand.

NFU women farmers will continue to support one another, and these new young farmers, by sharing knowledge, skill and experience. Please let us know what you are doing on your farm so that our data base of farmers willing to pass on their knowledge

increases. This new wave of farmers will then have the wisdom to help heal our food and farming systems. If you are willing and able to host a young person on your farm and pass on your experience and farming knowledge, please contact me.

We will all get several steps closer to achieving true Food Sovereignty when we demonstrate this kind of solidarity in action, on our farms, in our communities and in our organization. This will ensure a future for food and farming in Canada, while growing the NFU for generations to come.

*In Solidarity,
Colleen Ross, Women's President*

(Region 5 Report, from page 10)

By addressing these and other issues the way we do brings us into direct conflict with established order and power. Other voices continue to engage in the perfection of language of double-speak and denial while ignoring the failure of the policy that they have championed while demanding further deregulation, a lower Canadian dollar, greater trade access, coupled to improvements to our farm safety net system to cover the expected economic hardship.

The NFU is adept at pointing out the emperor of the marketplace has no clothes. The emperor of the unregulated marketplace now stands naked before us. He is now demanding government restore his respectability with a new suit of respectability financed by adding to the public debt financed by future tax increases, sale of public assets, cuts in public services, fewer farmers, and end to supply management and the

Canadian Wheat Board, lower wages, or any combination of all of the above.

In the cattle industry, we claim that a good bull is half of your herd, and a poor bull is all of your herd. Rural Canada has a tradition of accepting a destructive line of bull from our political and business leaders. It is now time for a new line of bull. Our new line of bull must not contain genetically patented life forms, or the rhetoric of discredited ideological residue left from the teachings of Milton Freedman. It is time to contract a new agricultural policy – an agriculture policy that meets the combined needs of the environment, farmer and the consumer. A national agricultural policy of food security based upon common sense, with the stated objective of producing food in a sustainable manner for the purpose of the public good.

In Union, Fred Tait

(Region 8 Report, from page 13)

Once again the NFU was turned to in Region 8 to do something. I am distributing a petition against the bill, but not under the NFU banner. In one meeting alone for the two petitions mentioned over forty signatures were placed on these petitions. Both petitions close at the end of April and will be presented to the legislature and read into the official record.

On a more positive note, plans are under way for the district and regional convention. Some exciting speakers are being lined up. We hope to come out of the convention with a revamp of the Locals and a plan to grow our membership.

In Union, Neil Peacock



(Changes needed to EI program, from page 19)

2. That substantial changes be made to the EI program to ensure that women workers, particularly those in rural communities, are able to fully access benefits – including job training and other educational programs – and that those benefits be increased;
3. That the EI program be changed to enable self-employed persons, including farmers, to participate meaningfully in the program; and
4. That net farm income, rather than gross farm income, be one of the criteria that is used in the calculation to determine the eligibility of an applicant's claim for EI benefits.

The full text of the NFU brief is available online at www.nfu.ca/briefs.html . —nfu—

NFU Youth Alumni Reunion

**An NFU Youth Alumni Reunion is in the works
for the summer of 2009.**

We are organizing a camping weekend and are calling out to all past and present youth members as we plan this event.

The location and dates are still to be determined.

Watch the Union Farmer for more details.

If you require information or if you have any suggestions, please contact:

**Jen Hamblin at: Email: jen.hamblin@viterra.ca
or Phone: (306) 543-4148**

or

Kari Koistinen at: Email: kariannk@gmail.com

NFU Regional Meetings:

Region 8: Saturday, June 6 – Farmington Hall, Farmington, BC

Region 7: Saturday, June 13 – Calmar Curling Rink, Calmar, AB

Region 6: Date and location to be determined

Region 5: Saturday, June 20 – Onanole Seniors Drop-in Centre, Onanole, MB

Log on to the NFU website at www.nfu.ca for further details.



We Remember ...

LORRAINE MARION MACHNIAK



The following eulogy was read by Vic Mackniak at Lorraine's funeral mass at St. Alphonsus Church in Rocanville, SK on March 21, 2009.

One cold day, December 4, 1930, Lorraine, the one and only child of Mary and Frank Snook, was born in the Grey Nuns Hospital in Regina. When she was two years old, the family moved to Cupar, Saskatchewan, and when of age, she attended Glen Murray School until the middle of grade 7. Being precocious, Lorraine could read before she started school. Next, she attended Cupar School from Grade 7-10. Lorraine was in Grade 8 when her mother died. She then attended Scott Collegiate in Regina where she lived with her Aunt Ruby and Uncle Wilfred Snook to Grade 11 and then Rose and Bill Rieger when in Grade 12. Upon completing her schooling, Lorraine worked at Simpsons (Sears) Warehouse Department for about one year in 1947-48.

She was married to Anton (Tony) Machniak on November 27, 1948 in Regina where they resided until the spring of 1952. Then they moved to the farm south of Cupar, where they lived until they bought a farm in the Rocanville area in April, 1957. She lived there for the rest of her life. Her father died in March or April, 1960. Lorraine and Tony raised Registered Polled Herefords from the late 1950s to the early 1980s. Lorraine was a very hands-on person when it came to cattle, keeping meticulous records, tracing the bloodlines back as far as possible. She knew all of them by sight and names, treating them like big pets. Lorraine did most of the baling and usually kept herself going by changing shear pins and unplugging the baler.

Lorraine, Tony and the family belonged to the Saskatchewan Farmers Union from the Cupar days and she became the SFU Women's Director for her area. They then belonged to the National Farmers Union from its inception in 1969, and became very involved and helped form Local 630. In 1970, Lorraine became the first woman nation-wide to be elected an NFU District Director. She didn't take second-place to any many in the organization. Her passion for the farm movement was evident and she helped bring about many changes for farm families. In the exercise of her position, Lorraine made many life-long friends across Canada.

Lorraine and Tony had four children: a son, Tommy, in October 1950, who died 5 days later; a son Brian on November 18, 1951; a daughter Patricia (Pat) on January 1, 1953; a daughter Linda on December 11, 1956. On June 26, Brian married Donna and they have three children: Brett (Lisa), Dwayne (Lea), and Chris (Crystal). Besides the three grandchildren to Lorraine and Tony, Lorraine had five great-grandchildren: Jordyn, Abby, Koby, Dakota and Brooklyn, with another due in June. Tony and Lorraine were very proud of their grandsons and their accomplishments, and Lorraine was also especially proud of the great-grandchildren that they have given her. She enjoyed every moment that she could spend with them, but due to health problems, this didn't happen as often as she would have liked, but they were always #1 in her heart.

On November 13, 1980, Tony passed away, and Brian took over the running of the farm. In August, 1982, Linda opened Mac-Lin's Convenience Store in Rocanville. Lorraine spent much of her waking hours for the next twelve years helping to manage the day-to-day operation of the store.

Lorraine spent most of 1976 in Calgary helping her daughter Pat cope with her business and failing health. Sadly, Pat passed away December 24, 1997.

As mentioned earlier, Lorraine could read before she went to school. Reading was an all-consuming life habit. She couldn't wait to get her Maclean's Magazine, which she would read from cover to cover. You would find stacks of all sorts of printed material in her house; she just couldn't throw away her treasures. Her dictionary, atlas, World Book and other sources of information were always handy to look up things that would come up in discussion or on the news. She had to know; she had a real thirst for knowledge. Is it any wonder when family and friends were playing Trivial pursuit, everyone wanted her to be on their team!

Some of the things that I remember of our days spent in Glen Murray School was the Shetland pony that Lorraine used to get to school. It was the first such pony I had ever seen. Another remembrance of those days was when Lorraine gave to me for Christmas a wind-up toy train that ran on a circular track. No, I don't have the train anymore, but I have the great memory. Our family used to drive the van that picked up the children who went to Cupar School. Carol remembers times when we would stop to pick up Lorraine and she would come rushing out with what was left of her uneaten breakfast. No doubt this was because she had been absorbed in some reading.

When Lorraine and Tony were on the Rocanville farm, our family used to visit fairly frequently. We adults would stay up late into the night discussing and debating much of what was happening at the time, and anyone who knew Lorraine knew that she had very strong opinions on a wide variety of subjects. So the night was stimulating and entertaining. The drinks were good too!

Lorraine was very passionate about the environment and animal rights, She had at least one pet her whole life (usually a dog). Lorraine always took an interest in people; she was a people person, and good-hearted. Since Lorraine was so well-read I would like to include this poem called "Poem of Life" – author unknown:

*Life is but a stopping place, A pause in what's to be,
A resting place along the road, To sweet eternity.
We all have different journeys, Different paths along the way,
We all were meant to learn some things, But never meant to stay...
Our destination is a place, Far greater than we know.
For some the journey's quicker, For some the journey's slow.
And when the journey finally ends, We'll claim a great reward,
And find an everlasting peace, Together with the Lord.*

We all have our special memories of Lorraine that we will always cherish. Our lives have been enriched by her. Much of what she was lives in us – her family and friends. Her spirit is alive and lives on. We will miss her. Farewell Lorraine – until we meet again in the New Life!



Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I would like to express my appreciation to MP Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton-Melville) for his open letter to Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz regarding the state of the cattle industry (The Melville Advance, February 4, 2009). In his letter he states that the AgriStability Program is of little benefit to our cattle producers. He is so right on that one. Due to the five year averaging formula used to calculate payments, the only thing that program assures is that the beef industry eventually will be stabilized at poverty levels. This also holds true for the grain industry.

Garry Breitkreuz also came up with this gem of truth, and I quote: "The average producer is not able to compete with the very large companies." David Bell, agriculture and business professor at Harvard University, seems to share these concerns and convictions with our MP, as he states: "The present North American agriculture sector, made up of thousands of small farmers competing for markets and dealing with a handful of suppliers and buyers, is insane, and must be changed."

Three transnational corporations control over 80 percent of North America's beef marketing. Four giant corporations dominate the world grain trade. On the input side, a mere handful of transnational corporations control all necessary farm inputs: machinery, fertilizer, herbicide, seed grain, fuel oil and rail services.

As farmers who produce food to feed the hungry of the world, we are little more than economic slaves for the rich and powerful corporations.

The above sentiments are mine probably not Garry Breitkreuz's. But I do appreciate MP Garry Breitkreuz speaking up for his constituents.

My very firm opinion is that a Member of Parliament's major purpose and duty is to convey his constituents' needs, wishes and wants to Ottawa, not the other way around, as Prime Minister Harper seems to think.

**George Hickie,
Waldron, SK**



KVD removal devastating for grain farmers

Dear Editor,

I have attended every country meeting to hear and receive the annual report of my director since I served as Chairman of the Canadian Wheat Board Advisory Committee. The title of this year's report was "Exceptional" – and it really was.

The board outlined their plan to brand all domestic products made from Canadian grain, long overdue.

What really distressed me, however, is this: Canada has been doing this with our grain for years with Kernel Visual Distinguishability (KVD). Our grain is recognized the world over by its shape.

Then, against the advice of every grain company, Minister Ritz went ahead and scrapped it before we had another method to do this, and put the responsibility on farmers to say what type of grain they were delivering.

If there was any dispute by our customers, farmers could be liable whether it was their fault or not. This will get worse now that we are losing our inland grading stations.

Are we losing our reputation as a reliable supplier of high quality grain? I've heard some would like to get rid of the CW, Canada Western, designation. Then, what have we got left? When can everybody get on the same page?

**Avery Sahl,
Mossbank, Saskatchewan**



National Farmers Foundation Report to Donors

Your National Farmers Foundation Board of Directors is pleased to report that we received \$11,276 in donations in the 2007-08 financial year ended September 30, 2008. This was an increase of 51% from the year previous.

We believe increasing numbers of members are becoming more aware of the benefits of supporting the NFF as a tax-exempt charity of choice. It has enabled us to support such educational projects this past year as the Ignatius Farm CSA mini-school in Ontario, and the NFU Youth Workshop held in Saskatchewan. This current year we have already helped fund the cost of sponsoring seven NFU participants to a Canadian-US-Mexican livestock conference held in Billings, Montana. Without the support of donors, these assistance grants would not be possible. We thank you and express the hope that our donor base may be increased. An envelope for your convenience is enclosed in this *Union Farmer* issue.

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By including the National Farmers Foundation among your "charities of choice", you are taking a positive action in supporting its educational and organizational programs in the rural community

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

Our donation envelope is included in this issue of *Union Farmer*. We look forward to your valued support! Thank you!

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



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NOVEMBER 26TH TO 28TH, 2009



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