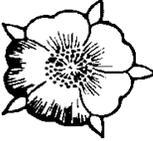


WILD ROSE



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NEWS

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REPORT ON THE CANADIAN FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURE CONVENTION

BY NEIL WAGSTAFF

Alan Holt and Neil Wagstaff represented Wild Rose Agricultural Producers at the 63rd Annual Meeting of the CFA held in Regina on February 24, 25 & 26.

Over 150 delegates and observers attended the Convention. Founded in 1935 to provide Canada's farmers with a single voice in Ottawa, the Canadian Federation of Agriculture is the country's largest farmers' organization. Its members include provincial general farm organizations as well as national and inter-provincial commodity organizations from every province. Through its members, CFA represents over 200,000 Canadian farmers and farm families.

Attending this convention gave Alan & Neil an opportunity to network with representatives from many other farm organizations from across the country. They also participated in the discussions and deliberations that took place while resolutions and policies were being proposed and adopted.

Farm Safety Nets

Farm safety nets were a topic of considerable discussion among delegates, especially in hallways and social situations. Agriculture and Agri-Food Minister Lyle Vanclief opened the CFA Annual Meeting less than one day after releasing the details of the Agricultural Income Disaster Assistance (AIDA) program. He faced some tough questions from the delegates, who generally were not happy with the way this program has been developed.

Jack Wilkinson, who was about to retire as CFA President and who will continue to serve as Co-chair of the National Safety Nets Advisory Committee said, "this program is not the program farmers expected and it is not the program farmers have been asking for. It didn't

Founded in 1935 ... the Canadian Federation of Agriculture is the country's largest farmers' organization.

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have to be linked to NISA and it could have covered negative margins. While AIDA has some serious shortcomings, it does provide the foundation for a long-term income protection program, something we will have to work towards."

Trade Policy

The theme of the convention was "Reforming our approach to trade reform". A lot of discussion centered on international trade talks and negotiations and how they are affecting Canadian farmers' income.

CFA has a number of Commodity Groups represented who have differing interests when it comes to trade policy. When a trade policy was finally adopted, all these interests were in agreement, which means the federal & provincial governments should take careful note in their future trade negotiation considerations.

European Community's Agenda 2000

Delegates had an opportunity to gain insight into the new and evolving realities of the global market place. They heard presentations from numerous officials about the European Community's efforts to reform its Agricultural Policy and the impact of non-tariff barriers on Canadian exporters. I had an opportunity to talk one on one with Tassos Haniotis, who is the EUs' Agriculture Counselor to the United States. He had made a comment regarding the CWB which made me think he did not understand how it functioned. I soon found out that he indeed did understand a lot about the CWB. However, he has a unique perspective on how the CWB is not a fair trader in the world wheat market, by being a single desk seller and being able to provide an advance payment to farmers.

Ralph Goodale was there as well

Natural Resources Minister Ralph Goodale spoke about the Biosafety Protocol and the Kyoto Agreement on climate change and how such world-wide efforts might affect agriculture. After his speech, I was part of a fairly lively discussion in the hallway with Mr. Goodale, regarding the Estey report.

Resolution Highlights

Some of the key policy decisions that were made included:

- a review and renewal of CFA farm safety nets guidelines and principals
- adoption of a response to the Estey Report on Grain Transport
- a re-commitment to the position on the Bio-safety Protocol, taken by Canadian government into last month's negotiations in Cartagena, Colombia
- a re-affirmation of CFA policy on government cost-recovery policies and practices, demanding accountability and a recognition of public good.
- adoption of a policy on the prevention of and compensation for crop damage caused by wild-life and waterfowl

New CFA President & Executive

Bob Friesen replaces Jack Wilkinson, the colourful farmer from Northern Ontario who has led the national farm lobby for the last six years. Prior to his election, Friesen served as Second Vice-President and Chair of the CFA Trade Committee. Joining him on the new CFA executive are First Vice-President Laurent Pellerin, the leader of Quebec's Union des Producteurs Agricoles (UPA), and Second Vice-President Marvin Shauf, from the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool.

Rural Development Committee Meeting

Shortly after we arrived we attended the Rural Development Committee Meeting. The main topic of discussion was a report that was developed from the National Rural Workshop, which was held on October 2-4 1998. This report identified a number of actions that participants felt the Federal Government needs to undertake to address rural citizens concerns in respect to quality of living in rural communities. It seems that there is going to be a lot of federal attention and money allocated to rural development projects in the near future.

It became quite obvious that there is quite a differing opinion regarding what role the federal government should play in rural development initiatives. One example was where Ontario & Quebec representatives felt that a toll should be placed upon all the rest of Cana-

REPORT ON THE CANADIAN FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURE CONVENTION – CONT'D

dian phone subscribers to develop a fund to upgrade rural telephone service in some regions that still have party line telephone service in these provinces. If Don Dewar from Keystone Ag. Producers, Maarten van Oord from the New Brunswick Federation of Agriculture and us had not spoken in opposition to this idea, there is a good chance it would have become a recommendation to the Federal Government!

Alberta Needs to be Represented at CFA

After attending this convention, I am even more convinced as to how important it is to have an Alberta Voice at CFA meetings and events.

CPR FINALLY SETTLES WITH THE

Through the efforts of the Canadian Wheat Board, prairie farmers will see an additional \$15 million returned to their pockets. The CWB reached an out of court settlement with the CPR bringing to a conclusion their actions against the railways. Originating as a “level of service” complaint as a result of the disastrous 1996-97 crop year in which bad weather resulted in lost sales and huge demurrage charges, the CWB has successfully recouped some of the losses producers incurred through poor rail performance.

Some farm organizations and provincial governments have been less than supportive of the CWB actions, yet millions of dollars are now flowing back to producers where none would have before. Wild Rose intervened originally on behalf of the Board and are especially pleased with the results.

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

BY ALAN HOLT

As I write these musings on the fourth day of spring, it is +12 C, and we still have over a foot of snow on the fields in the Bashaw area. But, spring has definitely sprung again! There is little water running in the ditches, which indicates the moisture should go into the fields, due to minimal frost in the ground. That is quite a change from this time last year when we had no snow, followed by little rain, which caused many farmers the extra work of hauling water to range cattle. If the prices on grain and oilseeds didn't look so dismal, we would all be a little more optimistic about receiving a decent return for our work and investment. Unfortunately, at this time, it looks as though a major drought in some large grain exporting country is the only thing that might improve grain prices.

We were very pleased to hear CP had settled with the CWB for \$15M due to lack of performance in the winter of '97. Although it will never be known by us, I think it would be reasonable to conclude CN's settlement was also close to the same amount. The CWB announced at a recent producer meeting, that their legal costs were \$2.6M. More important than the return of many millions of dollars to farmers is the fact that we both know performance must be improved, or farmers will seek, and probably receive, compensation. It is amusing to recall at least one western Canadian farm organization criticized the CWB for bringing forward the level of service complaint. Now that a settlement has been awarded, this same group

is complaining it's "not enough". Incidentally, this is the same organization that sat at the CGC meetings last fall with very little to say. After the CGC announced changes they would implement, the very person who attended these meetings issued a press release calling for privatization of services. I am proud to say Wild Rose works to bring about positive change by negotiation, not through an endless stream of meaningless press releases.

While thinking of lack of democracy, this brings to mind what's going on in safety nets these days. When I attended the Safety Net Coalition meeting March 1, we set future meeting dates of March 16 and March 29 to have speakers from private crop insurance companies speak to us. It wasn't until the Chairman of the Safety Net Coalition was on a provincial radio talk show that the coalition members learned the scheduled meetings were cancelled, and an alternate date had been set. By this time many of the regular attendees had planned other meetings on the new date. We also learned from this same radio program, that crop insurance was to be privatized. We had not been told of this proposed change at any coalition meetings. We certainly have to ask if there is any value in our continuing to participate. The government is simply using this group to add some credibility to the decisions they make behind closed doors.

Well, now I've got all that off my chest, there are also many positive things happening this spring. On a

personal note, Monica and I have been informed we will become grandparents this fall. We are very excited about that, and look forward to having more time to spend with our grandchild than we did with our own two boys when they were growing up.

Paul Thibodeau has reported that plans are proceeding well for the summer council meeting in Taber, June 28-29, 1999. Hopefully, this will provide the board and regional directors with some new enthusiasm to continue to carry out our duties.

The winds of change are moving faster than ever. The new CWB has a plethora of new issues to work on, the new executive of CFA has many important initiatives before them; changes are occurring rapidly in our major co-operatives as they face the difficulties of growing to remain competitive while returning most of the profits to their members. We at Wild Rose are being asked to provide input on an ever increasing number of issues. I don't think any of us will run out of work in the coming year.

I hope you all maintain a positive attitude as you get ready to return to the land. Please think safety every hour of every day!

Alan Holt

A REPORT ON THE ALBERTA FARM ANIMAL CARE (AFAC) LIVESTOCK CARE CONFERENCE

The 1999 AFAC Livestock Care Conference featured some of North America's most prominent speakers on animal welfare and handling issues. One of the strongest messages that emerged was that the agricultural industry must remain united and be prepared to defend responsible practices in the face of accusations from animal rights

The 1999 Livestock Care Conference hosted by the Alberta Farm Animal Care (AFAC) Association proved to be a shining example of strength in the union of an industry. Animal care specialists and representatives from all sectors of the agricultural industry, including beef, horse, poultry, hog and specialty meats, came together to examine animal welfare topics and issue a call-to-action against misconceptions being perpetuated by animal rights groups.

Above all, the agricultural industry must unite to launch a successful response to accusations from outside the industry, speakers told the audience at the Sheraton Cavalier in Calgary March 12. AFAC was formed to promote that united effort, says manager Susan Church.

"It surprises me when people from one segment of the livestock industry make negative comments about another segment of the industry," Church says. "We all have to take the time to learn about each other, because if we're divided on animal welfare issues, we won't succeed."

AFAC was formed in 1993 out of a partnership of livestock producers in Alberta. The mandate of the organization is to promote responsible, humane animal care within the livestock industry, to engage in discussion with the public about today's animal agriculture, to monitor and participate in issues and legislation that affect animal care and to encourage research relevant to animal care.

To achieve those goals, AFAC has developed educational materials for students, the general public and the livestock industry. These resources include 4-H L.A.W. (Learning about Animal Welfare), the video "Farm Animal Welfare - Changing Attitudes," various humane handling awareness and training courses and the annual Livestock Care Conference.

"AFAC realizes that discussions about sensitive animal welfare issues can often become heated and emotionally charged," explains newly-elected AFAC chairman Mike Hart. "That's why we set out to encourage open dialogue, based on facts and education, to help opposing groups reach an understanding."

The Livestock Care Conference is a focal point of that mission. The 1999 conference was proof that all sectors of the agricultural industry can come together to promote the proactive, responsible animal welfare strategies of the entire industry.

Speakers provide food for thought

The speakers at the 1999 Livestock Care Conference challenged the audience and the entire industry with their presentations on animal welfare issues, the tactics of animal rights activists and response strategy. At the same time, presentations celebrated the successes of the livestock industry in improving animal welfare and humane transportation systems to date.

Complacency is not an option when it comes to dealing with the animal rights movement, speakers told the conference audience. The morning's speakers presented several examples of how developing a response to animal rights activists can preserve and even strengthen an industry. At the same time, refusing to respond can topple industries. Speakers in the afternoon, who represented various processing plants, told the audience how their companies redefined handling practices for better business and improved animal care.

There are highlights of the presentations.

(Continued on page 6)

Defend responsible animal use, speaker tells animal care conference

Animal use groups should be prepared to defend responsible agricultural and experimental practices in the face of claims by the animal rights movement, says Patricia Guyda, president of the Montreal-based Canadians for Health Research (CHR).

Although CHR is focused primarily on educating society on the responsible use of animals for health research, she says the agricultural industry can benefit from much of what they've learned. The public has no reason not to believe what they are being told by animal rights activists if they are only hearing that side of the story, Guyda says.

She says it is crucial to distinguish between animal welfare and animal rights. The animal welfare movement has a long and respected tradition with the belief that humanity has the right to use animals, but equally asserts that humanity has a responsibility to ensure that all animals are properly treated. Guyda says that most people, including animal users, uphold these principles, even if they are not directly involved with the animal welfare movement.

The animal rights movements believes in the basic equality between human and animal life. That includes the belief that animals have a right not to be used by humans in any way.

The two groups differ significantly in their beliefs and in the methods they use to relay their messages to the public. Guyda says that, even though she is discouraged by the fear-related tactics sometimes used by animal rights extremists, there is some credit due to the animal rights movement. That's because they've succeeded in getting the public and animal user groups to think about how animals are used, she says.

In order to effectively respond to animal rights claims, animal use groups have to identify ways to deliver their messages to the public. Credibility and accuracy, plus a knowledge of opponents and their approaches are critical, she advises.

PMU industry developed response to critics

In the face of a major attack from the animal rights movement, the pregnant mare urine (PMU) industry was

able to launch a response, says Norm Luba, executive director of the North American Equine Ranching Information Council (NAERIC). The NAERIC approach was based on SWOT, or "strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats," as well as an openness to the public, Luba says.

Starting in 1994, animal rights groups launched a campaign based on claims that horses were abused in the process of developing the PMU product. The critics wrote letters to gynecologists, demonstrated, retained celebrity spokespeople for their cause and published articles against the PMU industry in Canada and the pharmaceutical companies in the United States.

He says the pharmaceutical companies should have seen the criticism coming. However, they didn't respond quickly enough, partly because of product security concerns, and partly because licensing restrictions from the Food and Drug Administration prevented them from doing so.

The response the industry developed, through NAERIC, was initially aimed at identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and eventually helped to build a stronger, more responsive industry for the future.

The agricultural industry will continue to be scrutinized, Luba acknowledges. He says that to develop effective responses, groups must take allegations from critics seriously, be proactive, think "outside the box," and never sit back thinking enough has been done.

Alberta can learn from Atlantic experience, minister says

The animal rights movement has destroyed a vital way of life for generations of Newfoundlanders who depend on the ocean for their livelihood, says John Efford, Minister of the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture for Newfoundland and Labrador. The danger is that public policy can be influenced by the animal rights movement and their accusations, rather than the truth about how the industry operates, he says.

As happened in Newfoundland, a group unrelated to an industry can drive the decision-making process and craft public and media perception of that industry, says Efford. Unless steps are taken now, the agricultural industry in Alberta could experience the same treatment.

AFAC LIVESTOCK CARE CONFERENCE – CONT'D

In the late 1970s, an anti-sealing animal rights group came into the province with a public relations campaign and began portraying Newfoundlanders and Labradorians as barbarians. From 1977 to 1995, no seals were hunted in Newfoundland. During that time, the seal population grew from about two-and-a-half million in total to in excess of six million in one species alone. In the meantime the cod fishery was shut down due to overfishing.

The growth of the seal population blocked the anticipated regeneration of the fishery. Efford says that's because one seal will annually consume about two tonnes of fish, including valuable cod, herring and mackerel.

"After seven years, in 1999, the biomass of northern cod stocks is worse today than when we closed the fishery in 1992," he says. "There's only one answer for it - seals are eating our cod and the cod are not getting a change to return to commercial numbers."

Efford says he realizes that people in Newfoundland and Labrador are responsible for contributing to overfishing and also for failing to respond to the animal rights publicity campaign. He hopes other industries across Canada can learn from their experiences.

Alberta meat processing plants develop humane systems

Alberta's major beef, hog, poultry and specialty meat processing plants have discovered that incorporating specialized animal handling programs is good business and at the same time gives valuable support to a public increasingly interested in animal welfare.

Speakers representing Maple Leaf Poultry, Fletcher's Fine Foods, Cargill Foods, IBP (Lakeside) Beef, and Bouvry Exports outlined how their companies have redefined animal handling procedures.

Barry Schneider, live operations and procurement manager with Maple Leaf Poultry, was instrumental in helping to develop a new handling and

trucking program for the company. He says Maple Leaf began looking at improving its live haul system in 1991.

The new modular live haul system developed by Maple Leaf makes it easier to catch, load and transport the chickens. The system which was critiqued and endorsed by United States animal care specialist Dr. Temple Grandin, reduces handling and temperature stress on the birds and increases air flow through the truck. The end result is a significant reduction in bruising and deaths upon arrival at the plant.

Fletcher's Fine Foods has also recently implemented a new handling system for the hogs that arrive at the plant for processing, says Dr. Matt Schoonderwoerd, a veterinarian with Fletcher's Fine Foods in Red Deer.

Fletcher's new processing system was developed in the Netherlands

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Coming Events

AFAC LIVESTOCK CARE CONFERENCE – CONT'D

(Continued from page 7)

and approved by Dr. Temple Grandin. The system, which uses state-of-the-art stunning equipment, has been operational since September, 1998. The plant kills about 32,000 to 33,000 hogs per week. Fletcher's goal in developing the new handling facilities was to process hogs in a manner that optimizes efficiency and minimizes stress for the animals.

Minimizing animal stress at each stage of processing is also a priority for Cargill and IBP (Lakeside Packers), Tim O'Byrne discovered on a recent tour of both plants.

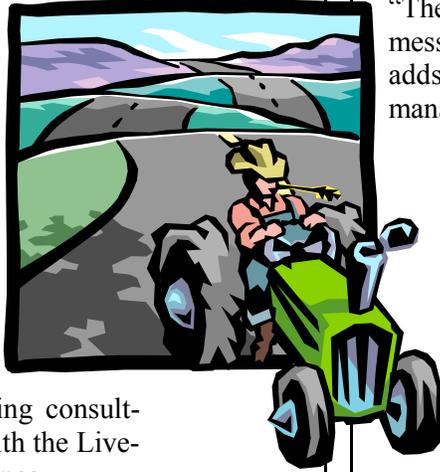
O'Byrne, a livestock handling consultant, shared his experience with the Livestock Care Conference audience.

He said the workers he observed at the facilities were experienced cattle handlers and the cattle were very quiet and calm as they walked to the processing floor. O'Byrne says the challenge for these companies is getting the facts out to the public in the midst of misconceptions perpetuated by animal rights activists.

Claude Bouvry, owner of Bouvry Export Limited, agrees that the agricultural industry is on the front lines as it defends responsible practices against the accusations of the animal rights movement. Bouvry's Fort MacLeod facility processes horse, bison and ostrich meat.

There is a public perception that the horse meat industry is a very secretive one, but Bouvry says he regularly opens his facility to tours for the public and the media. He says that consumers of all types of meat products worldwide want a quality product, but more than ever before they also want to know that the animal has been raised and processed humanely.

The road ahead



"Each Livestock Care Conference we've had shows how far the livestock industry has come in understanding the importance of animal welfare in day-to-day business," says Mike Hart, chairman of AFAC. "It also becomes clear how far we have to go."

"There's no room for complacency in ensuring our messages of responsible care reaches the public," he adds. "That communication will also make us better managers in the process."

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care of livestock;**

**If you are experiencing
management problems**

NEW SERVICE NOW AVAILABLE TO REGISTER PRIVATE CONSERVATION/OUTDOOR RECREATION LANDS

Operated by the Land Stewardship Centre of Canada (an independent, non-profit organization based in St. Albert, Alberta), the Conservation Lands Registry is a comprehensive, data-base screening service for “special case” lands. It’s designed to act as a one-call screening centre for oil, gas and other resource development companies to check for conservation interests or concerns on lands they may be developing.

“From conservation management agreements and private woodlots, to nestbox programs and outdoor recreation trails, thousands of conservation sites and other designations recognized by private landowners and conservation/outdoor organizations do not show up on Land Titles,” explains Ernie Ewaschuk, executive director of the Land Stewardship Centre. “We set this service up in response to concerns by several conservation groups that there was no way to efficiently flag these lands for developers.”

The Conservation Lands Registry is an effective method for both developers and conservation organizations or outdoor recreation groups to keep informed and work together to maintain conservation values when a site is being developed.

The following answers some key questions conservation/outdoor recreation organizations and private landowners may have about the Registry:

1. How does the Registry work?

- The Conservation Lands Registry acts as a one-call screening centre to allow developers to easily check for any conservation lands in one search request.
- Conservation organizations and individuals with their lands entered on the Registry’s database will be searched when requests come in from natural resource developers.
- Searches are requested by specific legal land descriptions (LLD) of quarter sections the
- developer would like searched. All matches to a search request are flagged and a contact name and number (for the appropriate organization) is provided for the developer to contact the organization directly for more details.

2. Are any sensitive details given out about the property?

No. All that is provided is confirmation that the property searched and matched by LLD has some kind of conservation/ environmental interest and that it is recommended to contact the appropriate agency. No details are divulged about wildlife sensitivities, private ownership or any other facts or notes. Each conservation organization supplies only the pertinent information required for the Registry’s search engines (i.e. LLD and your organization’s appropriate contact, phone number, address).

3. What about security . . . who has access to the database?

The data of each conservation organization or individual is held in strict confidence. There is security access and storage.

Each organization’s data is not available or accessible, in whole or in part, to any other conservation organization, company, individual or group except the source organization that provided its own data. *You retain all rights and ownership of your data.*

4. What sites can be included in the Registry and can any organization, group or individual register their lands?

Any organization or citizen with a **formal interest** in the conservation of a particular site can register. (This is not always the holder of the land title.) The decision on which sites to register are at the judgement and discretion of the registrant. Typically, the land location has values, enhancements or uses where the conservation and management of natural or cultural features are important. Registered sites

5. Is there a charge to register?

No. We only ask that you keep the status of your lands on the Registry updated.

If you, or your organization are interested in registering, land to be included in the *Conservation Lands Registry*, please call:

Land Stewardship Centre of Canada
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St. Albert, Alberta, T8N 1H6
Ph: (780) 458-5700 Fax: (780) 458-5708
E-mail: lsc@compusmart.ab.ca

BILL 209 – ALBERTA WHEAT AND BARLEY BOARD

In late February, we received a letter from Mark Hlady, MLA for Calgary-Mountainview indicating he was proposing a private member's bill. He indicated this bill would provide Albertans with a "dual market", however the contents of the 12 page Act itself indicate otherwise.

The proposed crop year would be August 1 – July 31. The fiscal year would be April 1 – March 31. This would make for some very challenging bookkeeping.

Article 12 (a), states that the board has the power to direct and control by order or direction, including times and places at which grain may be marketed.

Article 18 (I), no person shall commence or continue producing grain except under authority of a license.

Article 20 (b), the board may appoint persons to inspect the books, records, documents, lands and premises and any grain of persons engaged in the marketing of grain.

Article 22, the board shall use every profit for paying the board's expenses and carrying out the Act and Regulations.

Article 25 (I), if the board is "of the opinion" a person is producing or marketing grain in contravention of the Act, they may obtain

an order from the courts to seize, detain or dispose of the grain.

Article 26, a person who contravenes this Act is guilty of an offence and liable to a fine of up to \$2,000 for a first offence, and up to \$5,000 for the second offence.

NEED WE SAY MORE!

These are only a few excerpts from the proposed Act. We urge you to obtain a copy from the government or off the Internet. If you have any concerns about any part of this Act, please phone your MLA, and make your thoughts known to them.

YES! I wish to join Wild Rose Agricultural Producers

Name: _____ Spouse: _____

Address: _____ Town: _____

Postal Code: _____ Telephone: _____ Fax: _____

I enclose - Membership fee :

Producer	\$ _____	(\$107.00)
3 - Year	\$ _____	(\$288.90)
Associate	\$ _____	(\$ 53.50)

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EXERPTS FROM WILD ROSE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS SUBMISSION ON THE ESTEY REPORT

It is very clear to our members and to the agricultural community in general that changes need to be made to improve the grain handling and transportation system in Alberta, and in Western Canada. Unfortunately, various opinions on how grain should be *marketed* taint an objective evaluation from both the pro-CWB and anti-CWB factions. When Justice Estey initially began his study, we were under the impression that the study's main underlying goal was to outline a system that would improve the economic viability of the grain producer. Somewhere along the way this focus was lost and any assurances that the producer would benefit gave way to railway and grain company profitability. In essence, a goal of achieving a \$40 million dollar reduction system is a drop in the bucket to an individual producer, particularly when we are talking about a billion dollar plus operation. Justice Estey set the goals too low and changed the focus of the report from passing reductions on down to the farmer to ensuring profitability.

Before getting into greater detail on the specifics of the report, we believe it is important to preface our remarks. The nature of agricultural production is forever changing. In Alberta, much like other provinces, there has been considerable attention paid to diversification and value added production. The dependence on export grain sales will continue to become of declining importance as local markets are created. Recent projections indicate that the total bulk amounts of grain transported by railways will either remain stable or perhaps even decline. The need for a complete overhaul of the system may not be as entirely necessary today as it was ten or twenty years ago.

If pressed, the railways, the grain companies and the Canadian Wheat Board will freely admit that there has been a much improved system of co-operation this year as compared to the last few years. We believe that this can be attributed to the recent CTA hearings regarding the "level of service" by the railways. Although Canadian Pacific Railway continues to deny its obvious liability, (as pointed out in the CTA judgement) the railways seemed to have realized that a **cooperative** environment, not an exclusive environment, certainly enhances the transportation system as **all players have an interest in running an effective system.**

Many of those who are analyzing the Report seem to believe it is an all or nothing situation. We strongly object

to this approach. In fact, there are a number of recommendations in the Report that, if adopted immediately, would have a dramatic impact in rural Alberta

All in all, Wild Rose Agricultural Producers maintains that any changes made to the grain handling and transportation system be for the benefit of producers. Throughout the Estey report, he maintains that efficiencies will result in lower cost that should be passed on to the producers. Conversely, nowhere is it stated in the Report that if the changes result in higher rates it ultimately will be the producer who pays. It is this concern we must address.

This review suggests a number of very significant changes in the transportation and grain handling systems, but also has dramatic implications on the marketing system. In fact, Justice Estey has intertwined marketing with transportation and grain handling without looking at various possibilities of keeping them separate. In any event, a close review of the recommendations needs to occur before implementation.

Comments on the Final Report

It is apparent from the opening comments made by Justice Estey in his Summary of Recommendations that he has not fully understood the complexity of the producer's and Canadian Wheat Board's involvement in the grain industry. To indicate that the adoption of the Recommendations would "introduce no startling new rules or principles for the operations of the Board in Western Canada's grain industry" only illustrates this fact.

Recommendation 1

The quest for efficiency, cost-savings and competition is indeed very important. Over the course of the last few years considerable improvement has been completed at the Port of Vancouver, so much so that we may now have an over-capacity. Nevertheless, to promote competition it may be favorable to enhance Prince Rupert, if, and only if, it does not take place at the expenses of producers.

There is some argument to be made that this would be a

(Continued on page 12)

(Continued from page 11)

very good opportunity for governments to get involved financially since in the long run it would enhance exports of not only bulk commodities, but also all other types of exports. In the case of Alberta, the Ports of Churchill and the Seaway are becoming less and less important since a majority of grain does not flow that way. Since both Ports serve the same markets, a good argument could be made to close Churchill.

Recommendation 2

No comment.

Recommendation 3

First and foremost, there should be no need to clean grain twice. If standards are set, the location of where the grain is cleaned is almost secondary. If a market can be found for the dockage in the prairies, without distorting the local markets, then there is no reason why grain cannot be cleaned inland.

Recommendation 4

The ability for producers to have producer-cars at their disposal should be retained in the law. It is in this recommendation, however, where Justice Estey warns producers of the consequences that could result from the adoption of his report. He refers to producer cars as a "defensive protection for the farmer" an ominous statement with a rather negative context.

Recommendation 5

Wild Rose Agricultural Producers is a member of the Farmer Rail Car Coalition. Their submissions to Justice Estey and their response to the final report certainly outline some of our concerns. Briefly summarized, the right of first refusal of the railways to buy the taxpayer purchased cars should be removed. This fleet of cars should continue to be dedicated to western Canada and not just "made available" as Justice Estey suggests.

Recommendation 6

The original concept of CAPG was to bring all interested parties together to create the means to deliver product to consumers in the most efficient and economic way possi-

ble. This recommendation gives complete control over allocation to the railway. Inevitably, producers will lose the ability to have equal access to the delivery system

One of the cornerstones of a free enterprise system is that the more competition in the market, the better the service for the consumer. Unfortunately, the dupoly in our rail system does not provide the agricultural community the same luxury. By not allowing a producer at the table to ensure equitability and fairness, railways will ensure that productive and profitable lines are well serviced and those marginally profitable lines will suffer the consequences. Some other organizations in Alberta have indicated that a commercial system is the best system for Alberta, even though they recognize that it will not work for the Peace Country or for North Eastern Alberta. They are willing to sacrifice producers in these areas to achieve possible gains (or for that matter, possible losses) for the central and southern farmers. The economic considerations of the railways should not outweigh the economic considerations of the producers. It should quickly be pointed out to governments and railways alike that if there is not some degree of equitability of rates in all areas of agricultural production, farmers will be forced to re-evaluate their location and either cease production or move.

Recommendation 7

In Canadian Pacific Railways's submission to Justice Estey they indicate that if the rail rate cap is removed, they will be able to save shippers \$40 million over the next six years. A couple of points need to be considered. Despite the fact that CPR has been found negligent through the CTA hearings of not providing sufficient service to the grain sector a mere three short years ago, we are now going to take their word that if given the independence to do the job, and no guidelines on individual rates, they will be able to pass on savings to the producers. Secondly, if they can guarantee rates will go down, then a rate cap is a moot question. The only reason for the CPR to do away with the rate cap is so that they can raise the rates of certain branch lines dramatically and therefore, use the money to offset costs on the main lines. This ensures they will reach their so-called guarantee. It is also very interesting to note that other railways did not endorse this recommendation immedi-

ately.

Recommendation 8

Competition between railways is a noble idea, not easily attained. Joint running rights are only effective when they offer mutual economic benefits. More often than not, this is not the case. A prime example of this in Alberta is the inability of the railways to agree on joint running rights to service the Nova petrochemical facility in Joffre, Alberta. Unable to reach agreement, a second set of tracks were constructed, using valuable property and adding further safety concerns in the area.

Recommendation 9

The concern here is that a new level of beauracracy will emerge as a pool of qualified arbitrators is established. If, as is suggested, the producer becomes the shipper there is a possibility of numerous arbitration cases since the number of shippers increases so dramatically.

Recommendation 10

The recommendations presented are fine. A problem exists, however, in that on one hand Justice Estey recommends more community ownership of branch lines, but by repealing the rate cap as was previously recommended, these short lines will be economically unworkable. The larger railways will continue to abandon unprofitable branch lines that are uneconomical even for small owners while at the same time maintaining profitable lines.

Recommendation 11

This recommendation should be the

Federal Government's highest priority. If no other recommendation is acted upon within the Estey Report, this is one area where there is no doubt of the necessity for this immediate action. Roads within rural Alberta are deteriorating at a rapid rate and the infusion of federal dollars is absolutely necessary in order to maintain and improve the transportation infrastructure system. Since the elimination of the Crow rate, producers have been forced (by higher transportation costs alone) to alter their marketing habits and explore new alternatives. In addition, there has been a significant push for value-adding by all levels of government. Closing branch lines, elevator rationalization, and expanded local marketing opportunities have all forced producers to transport their own commodities by road. Municipalities have been burdened with the cost of upkeep, while all other levels of government above them have downloaded or discontinued funding of services. Federal revenues generated from fuel tax must be returned to the communities so that they can continue to provide safe, adequate transportation routes to market.

Recommendation 12

This recommendation seems to have nothing to do with the grain handling and transportation system but has everything to do with marketing. Additionally, the recommendation fails to recognize the variation and complexity of wheat types and grades and instead introduces a generic approach similar to canola.

Recommendation 13 /14

Again, Justice Estey has focussed on marketing, not transportation or grain

handling. It is important that producer contracts deliver some degree of equality. Certainly, contract call could be terminated earlier and grain delivered sooner but this is already occurring. The marketing system Justice Estey proposes should be examined by the new, democratically elected Board of Directors of the Canadian Wheat Board and if, and only if, they feel that the proposed changes would benefit producers, should the changes be adopted. Any recommendations that the report presents should not impinge on the ability of the new Board of Directors to determine how the CWB should operate.

Removing the CWB from transportation planning could only serve to obstruct further the relationship between the farmer and the end user. An important consideration in this type of proposal is who benefits from blending. Presently, since the CWB is able to manage the total prairie inventory in such a way that terminal blending of wheat and barley becomes a value-added process. This value is then accumulated in pool accounts for those grains. On the proposed tender basis, the value-added benefits will be accumulated by the grain companies. Wild Rose maintained from the very beginning that a refined system of performance contracts were the key to improving the transportation and grain handling system. Significant financial incentives and penalties should be introduced to the system in order to induce compliance. The newly elected Board of Directors of the Canadian Wheat Board must be allowed to time and flexibility to determine the role of the board in transportation and handling and as a result the mar-

(Continued on page 14)

THE ESTEY REPORT – CONT'D

(Continued from page 13)

keting aspects may change.

Recommendation 15

A review should certainly take place, but the time lines given are far too short. An initial review needs to be conducted to see if there have been any changes in the past three years and this would act as a basis for further reviews three to five years down the road.

Certainly the members of Wild Rose Agricultural Producers would like to see improvements in the grain han-

dling and transportation systems. A number of the proposals in the Estey Report address in part, areas of concern. The main thrust of the report, however, seems to have strayed from ensuring producers receive the benefits of a more streamlined system to ensuring grain companies and railways receive the benefits. While there may be a trickle down effect for producers, the adoption of the Estey Report in its entirety will not, in the long run, benefit agricultural producers to any substantial degree.

A WORD FROM THE WESTERN WOMEN'S DELEGATION TO CFA

By Terry Lee Degenhardt

Several years ago, Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) created 2 positions on its Board to ensure that the voices of farm women are heard around the table. The women, one from eastern Canada, and one from western Canada, have their full expenses paid by CFA rather than by member organizations, as is the case with other Board members. As Board members, they have speaking and voting rights. CFA operates in many cases by consensus, voting only when the points of conflict have been ironed out. Details of most issues are dealt with in smaller committees - open to all Board members who are interested. In other words, as a Board member, I can take part in as many of the committees as I have an interest in, and time for. Committee meetings are held in conjunction with Board meetings - the day before, early morning, or lunch time. Committees include trade, environment, rural, communication, transportation and it is under these topics that most of the issues that arise, are dealt with.

CFA has on-going projects on farm safety, agricultural awareness, "The Great Globalization Game" (actually a game sort of like a cross between Trivial Pursuit and Monopoly, but focused on details of trade), and the Canadian on-farm safety program (food quality assurance).

Issues being dealt with include safety nets, and especially the disaster assistance, trade position, transportation, animal compensation, employment insurance concerns, endangered species, farm chemical issues, biosafety protocol, climate change, patenting life forms, and cost recovery. Of particular interest to me with my M.Sc. soil science, is the climate change issue, and the possibility of soil as a carbon sink, or natural retainer to tie up atmospheric CO₂ and hold it out of the air as soil organic matter, or crop residue. Hurdle number one is to get the international community to accept that soil is a carbon sink. Hurdle number two is the research necessary to determine how much CO₂ is actually taken out of the air, and kept out, for each tonne of crop production, because microbial decomposition of crop residues immediately begins to release CO₂ back into the air and that release of carbon back to the air is speeded up by cultivation, by moisture and by warmth. Good research data is important so that we, as farmers, can begin to manage the amount of carbon that we sequester on our farms, and the amount we can keep sequestered in the long term.

Climate change is not the only issue of importance. Trade issues will continue to play an important role with the upcoming round of world trade talks. Biosafety protocol and patenting of life forms have huge potential to impact the viability of farming in the future. I'd welcome any thoughts or concerns that you might have on these, or any other issue. Our phone number is 780-856-2383, any time and leave a message if we're not in

ALBERTA FARM ORGANIZATION HISTORY- ARTIFACTS

The committee to preserve Alberta farm organization history is looking for artifacts.

The committee was first struck to find a home for UNIFARM artifacts. The idea snowballed to include all Unifarm's predecessors – Alberta Federation of Agriculture, United Farmers of Alberta Co-operative Ltd., United Farm Women of Alberta, Alberta Farm Union, Farmers' Union of Alberta, Farm Women Union of Alberta.

Reynolds "Alberta" Museum was contacted and the immediate interest expressed by Dan Bodie, Curator, was all it took to decide we had found the right home.

We are now partnering with Reynolds "Alberta" Museum to have Unifarm and its forerunner, farm organizations artifacts reside there.

Please describe each artifact and send us a list of items (Do not send us the artifacts – yet.) This list will then go to the curator for final selection. Any material collected and not needed will be sent to the provincial museum or archives.

Please record each donor and what they have donated. Articles will not be returned, so please list only those items that we can permanently keep in the museum.

Although the project has just started, the response is phenomenal. Former members all over the province are

helping search their own communities.

They are approaching family members, as many persons who were actively involved in farm organizations are now deceased.

They are looking in old meeting halls for photographs, plaques, old desks, certificates, trophies and old minute books.

Already we have lists being sent to us. These lists contain a 70 year old cookbook, pins, pens, a gavel, an FUA tie, plaques, box full of old records, membership books, newspaper clippings, and photographs.

If you have any doubt as to whether you should list an item – list it.

In essence, we are building a memorial to all the men and women who worked so hard and sacrificed so much for the betterment of ALL in agriculture.

Please send your list to:

Eileen Nagel (Mrs. Hartmann Nagel)

RR 1

Woking, Alberta

T0H 3V0

Telephone: (780) 774-2062 Fax: (780) 774-2021

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO PAST MEMBERS!!!!

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO READ OUR NEWSLETTER. AS A PAST MEMBER OF OUR ORGANIZATION, YOU HAVE RECEIVED A COMPLIMENTARY COPY OF THIS ISSUE. YOUR SUPPORT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO US.

PLEASE FILL OUT THE MEMBERSHIP FORM IN THIS NEWSLETTER AND HELP ENSURE AGRICULTURE HAS A VOICE!

CONSERVATION TIME

THE ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AROUND LIVESTOCK MANURE:

BY GRANT GILLUND, P.AG., AAFRD

Our fathers and grandfathers considered livestock manure the ultimate way to boost yields. Just as good as breaking a new piece of land – with less roots and rocks to pick. Manure was a great fertilizer. IT STILL IS, So then, what is all the hoopla about manure spreading, feeding sites and intensive livestock operations.

The problems always existed. Today, our understanding and appreciation of the problems is considerably greater than it was 50 years ago or even 10 years ago. We now accept the fact that agriculture can and sometimes does have a negative impact on the environment, just like any other industry. So what is considered MIS management today was overlooked or even approved as a good practice 20 years ago.

Let's take a look at the issues.

Cattle Wintering Sites

Poor selection of cattle wintering site results in run-off or the spring flooding along the creek washing the manure into the stream. Manure is rich in bacteria and in surface water poses a health risk.

Of less immediate impacts are the nutrients in manure that get washed into the stream. Those same nutrients that boost the yield of wheat do the same to the algae or duck weed in water. Nutrient loading of water systems can make them toxic to drink, un-useable for recreation and toxic to aquatic life.

Manure Spreading

Taking the manure out of the pens or out of the lagoons and spreading it on a field can be an extremely odorous affair. The longer the manure lays on the surface in a field, the longer the nose of the public is enraged. Of interest to the farmer using manure as a fertilizer source, the faster the manure is covered up, the quicker the public's nose is pacified and lower the loss of nitrogen from the manure application.

Manures should not be spread on frozen or snow covered soil. Large quantities of the manure are washed

away in the spring thaw. Again manure and nutrients from manure end up in the surface water.

Nitrogen Loading

Historically manures have been applied at rates to provide the nitrogen requirements of the subsequent crop. In some instances, where land base is limited or when manure is viewed as a waste and the field as a dump site, more manure than necessary is applied. Applying nitrogen in excess of crop requirements can lead to groundwater nitrate contamination. High levels of nitrate in drinking water can be toxic, particularly to children. This has occurred in many locations in Alberta as confirmed by the Alberta water quality survey done recently.

Phosphorus Loading

High levels of phosphorus in surface water causes algae blooms that can lead to kill-off in the aquatic life. Manure can be a major contribution source of the phosphorus in watersheds because the phosphorous in manure is much more soluble and mobile than the phosphorus from conventional commercial fertilizers.

Soil tests for phosphorus on some heavily manured lands in Alberta show levels of 100 – 200 ppm (10 times natural levels) with some extreme samples in excess of 1500 ppm. But high soil phosphorus levels do not automatically mean high risk to surface water. Some fields do not have run off that flows into the watershed. Other fields may be located a long distance from the stream or lake and much of the phosphorus can be filtered out before reaching the stream.

A major aspect about phosphorus risk from manure is that we have a lot to learn. The best management practices for manure phosphorus are yet to be decided.

Salt Loading

Manures from livestock other than poultry can contain rather large amounts of salt. When manure is applied in heavy amounts in one application or over a length of time, the salt loading can seriously affect the soil

CONSERVATION TIME – CONT'D

structure and the soil productivity. The sodium and other salts in the manure move out of the soil rooting zone extremely slowly especially when there is not enough rainfall to wash them down.

Siting

The major issue of siting of intensive livestock facilities is one of odor. Although the animals themselves can smell a little, it is their accumulated and stored wastes that really create a stink. Only now, are studies being done to check if there are actual health hazards to neighboring residents of a feedlot or hog barn. Preliminary results indicate there is some connection. We in agriculture have to face the fact that some people find the odor of livestock operations much more than just a “nuisance” and they are prepared to rigorously stand up

for their views, even without the proof in hand. We are likely to soon see some medical basis for the arguments in addition to the emotion presently being submitted in the development permit appeals.

Concluding Remarks

These are the major intensive livestock issues at this time. Intentionally, there has been no effort to judge the validity of the claims in this issue, defend a point of view or to suggest remedial measures. The purpose of the article has been to point out the issues, and to explain why the issue exists.

Operations in Alberta Now Available in Alberta Now Available????

