

**THE SASKATCHEWAN  
ORGANIC DIRECTORATE  
PRESENTS**

**A COMPILATION OF  
WRITTEN WORK BY**

**ELMER LAIRD**

***PIONEER OF SASKATCHEWAN  
ORGANIC AGRICULTURE,  
FOUNDER OF THE BACK TO THE FARM  
RESEARCH FOUNDATION,  
AND HALL OF FAME 2008 INDUCTEE***

Rosemary McCallum (editor)  
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## *Preface*

Agriculture has played a key role in shaping the identity of Saskatchewan and its people throughout modern history. The province's economy, politics, culture, and international relations have evolved in correlation to the issues and trends in the farming community. Recent decades have seen the emergence of powerful transnational corporations (TNCs), the development of agricultural chemicals and biotechnology, and the adoption of intensified production methods that constitute conventional agriculture. Meanwhile, the environment is deteriorating, hunger is spreading, new health concerns are surfacing, and family farms are disappearing, resulting in a 'farm crisis.'

The face of agriculture has been dramatically altered since the era of the prairie homestead. Elmer Laird, a pioneer in Saskatchewan organic farming since 1969, has closely followed these developments for several years. He is a strong farm leader and an ardent supporter of organic farming as a sustainable alternative to conventional agriculture. Born in Swift Current in 1924, Laird fondly looks back to the prairie homestead and the 1930s Depression for inspiration in addressing current issues facing farmers, rural communities, politicians, and consumers. He served in the Royal Canadian Air Force during World War II, where he fought for the rights and freedoms of citizens. Laird has continued this struggle, as a defender of the rights of farmers, consumers, and environmental justice.

Upon his return in 1947, he purchased farmland near Davidson, SK and began conventional farming in 1949. He served as a director for the Saskatchewan Farmers Union for several years, travelled to Ghana and Nigeria in 1964 for an agricultural study through External Aid, and attended the founding convention of the National Farmers Union (NFU) in 1969. That same year, he married Gladys McKay and he switched to organic farming, although the term 'organic' was non-existent. His decision was based on economic factors; grain prices were extremely low and he decided that cutting the high cost of chemical inputs was the most viable route to continue farming.

The Lairds became outstanding champions for organic farming in Saskatchewan and were joined by other NFU members in establishing the Back to the Farm Research Foundation (BFRF) in 1973. Laird acted as President and led the group in promoting organic farming, analysing agricultural policy, and sponsoring conferences. His wife was a research librarian and helped by conducting organic and environmental research, hosting lunches and dinners, and providing a constant supply of cookies for meetings and visitors. In 1983, the BFRF sponsored the Canadian Organic Producers Marketing Co-operative Limited (the first of its kind in Canada), a cleaning and processing plant at Girvin, SK, and marketed certified organic products domestically and abroad.

Gladys Laird passed away in 1999 and two years later, Elmer Laird retired and donated his land and farmyard to the BFRF. It became the first Certified Organic Research and Demonstration Farm in Canada and Laird served as Farm Manager. Laird has shared his views and experiences in numerous letters to politicians and other public figures, a monthly article in *alive* magazine, and in a weekly column in the *Davidson Leader* for over fifteen years. He has won several awards for his contributions, including the 2006 Environmental Activist Award and Lifetime Achievement Award from the Saskatchewan Eco-Network, the Pioneer Organic Visionary Award at the 2006 Organic

Connections Conference, an entry in *The Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan: A Living Legacy*, and induction into the Saskatchewan Agricultural Hall of Fame in 2008.

This document is a compilation of written work by Laird covering topics relevant to organic agriculture. It introduces the multi-faceted benefits of growing organic, the process of obtaining organic certification, organic farming methods, and the expanding market for organic products. It also presents a thorough critique of conventional farming, its corporate advocates, and agricultural policy with utmost importance given to rural communities, the environment, and consumer health. Finally, it offers a play-by-play, first-hand account of prominent issues including securing National Mandatory Organic Certification Standards, Mad Cow Disease, the Plant Breeders' Rights Act, and the Percy Schmeiser vs. Monsanto case from the perspective of the most important player in agriculture – the local farmer.

*Rosemary McCallum*

# I. ORGANIC AGRICULTURE



Elmer Laird swaths a crop of wheat and flax at the Back to the Farm Research Foundation's demonstration farm. This is one of 17 test plots at the farm demonstrating the practice of intercropping as a method of controlling weeds and pests.

(Leader photo by Tara de Ryk)

"The basic difference between organic farming and conventional (chemical) farming is the fact that organic farmers work with nature and chemical farmers try to control nature. Personally speaking, Mother Nature is a pretty powerful old girl and I like to have her on my side."

--- Elmer Laird, January 24, 2000

*As a farmer and leader of organic farming, Elmer Laird is extremely familiar with the philosophy, methods, and challenges of growing organic. However, he also knows that it is a field of constant innovation, discovery, and creativity. Unlike conventional farming, there is no formula or blueprint; organic farmers must work with the natural conditions of the region and rely on each other as key sources of knowledge. Laird introduces the meaning and importance of organic agriculture and discusses farming methods such as crop rotation, intercropping, allelopathy, natural fertilizers, soil conservation, and using weeds as soil indicators.*

*He also discusses organic products and their growing market, particularly stone-ground organic flour, wild oats, beef, dairy products, and dandelions. Non-food topics include the legalization and production of hemp, organic tobacco, and organic clothing. There is also an article on Fair Trade, which today has garnered much support, but at the time was not yet available in Saskatchewan.*

*National Mandatory Certification Standards are important for maintaining reliable quality of product, accessing domestic and foreign markets, and earning consumer trust. However, it was a long road to obtaining standards in Canada, which can be followed through articles on the subject spanning over ten years.*

*Certified organic inspections are another key aspect of organic agriculture and Laird explains their importance and the various steps and procedures involved.*

*Finally, The Back to the Research Farm and its goals, endeavours, and role in the organic community are presented, which lend themselves to the overall vitality of the province.*

# GROWING ORGANIC

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January 24, 2000 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:

Dr. Robert McDonald, executive director Canadian Organic Advisory Board Inc.

Dear Mr. McDonald,

(Note to readers: After about 13 years Canadian organic producers finally have national certification standards for all organically produced food in Canada. Robert McDonald, who has a PhD in Etymology, has been appointed executive director of the Canadian Organic Advisory Board Inc. and an office has been established in Calgary.)

There are still a few Is to be dotted and a few Ts to be crossed, but we are on the way. There are presently 47 voluntary certification organizations across Canada. The standards that are developed by the Canadian Organic Advisory Board have been approved by the Standards Council of Canada.

Certification organizations whose members are marketing into the export market will have to meet all the above standards plus the International Standards of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture movements. Voluntary Certification organizations across Canada will be upgrading their organic certification standards in the next few months to meet national and international standards. Dr. McDonald has asked me to write him a letter setting out what I think the future challenges are to the organic industry and the Canadian Organic Advisory Board Inc. they are:

## **Philosophy and purpose of organic farming**

Ms. Evelyn Potter, of Biggar, Sask. was the first female president of the National Farmers Union. When she addressed farm audiences, she frequently said, "We didn't inherit the land from our ancestors, we borrowed it from our descendants and we should leave it in better shape than we received it." Chemical agriculture will never meet her objectives because it's a process that causes soil degradation and pollutes the soil, air and water. Organic agriculture internationally with some modifications such as developing self-sufficient farms, communities, provinces and nations may meet the demands of the next millennium including the environmental objectives of the Kyoto Conference if encouraged and nurtured by society.

The basic difference between organic farming and conventional (chemical) farming is the fact that organic farmers work with nature and chemical farmers try to control nature. Personally speaking, Mother Nature is a pretty powerful old girl and I like to have her on my side. However, I must admit that after over 30 years farming organically I don't always understand what her intentions are. Potter is right, farmers are



custodians of the soil that is used for agriculture and the water resources on that land.

### **Education and research on nutrition**

The greatest challenge facing the organic industry is how to get the nutrition from the soil and sea to the consumer's table and return the unused nutrients to the soil. However, there are not many fish in the sea and soils in many parts of the world have been depleted. The book *My Plundered Planet* (1948) by Fairfield Osborn describes the Sahara Desert as once a fertile plain but soil fertility was destroyed by wind erosion. Many of today's farming practices such as methods of cultivation, use of agriculture chemicals, over grazing and poor crop rotations are all contribution to soil degradation. Over fishing and pollution from the land is destroying fish stocks.

Global population has jumped from just over 2 billion in 1950 to 6 billion today. Good nutrition and a healthy environment are necessary for their wellbeing. When we moved into the new millennium-century year on January 1, 2000 press reports stated that \$750 billion had been spent globally to make sure the computers of the world worked for the new millennium but there was not mention of money to be spent on food or nutrition security. In all the millions of dollars that are being spent on research none to my knowledge is being spent on how to get the nutrition from the soil and sea to the consumer's table or what are the inhibiting factors.

### **Develop a soil and water conservation program for organic farmers**

Good soil and water conservation practices are inseparable. The first step in good soil conservation practices is to increase the fibre content of the topsoil, particularly on the knolls. More soil fibre increases both the soil fertility and water holding capacity of the topsoil. It is also important to make sure that soil micro-organisms are given every opportunity to develop to their maximum potential. Deep-rooted legumes are necessary to break up the hard pan and provide an opportunity to bring up trace minerals that are deep in the ground and create an opportunity for the movement of water up and down in the soil.

The soil is not a dead environment but is in fact very much alive. Within the soil there is a whole range of living organisms performing many of the functions essential to the maintenance of soil fertility. One group of micro-organisms present in the soil is the soil algae. These are microscopic plants consisting of one cell or a group of cells joined together in various arrangements. Like other plants they take up nutrients from the soil and fix carbon dioxide into various organic materials which may be used directly by the algae or released from the cell into the soil.

Crop rotations including both cereals and legumes are important for weed control and soil restoration. Green manuring, manuring and composting are a part of good soil conservation practices and livestock and poultry have a very important role.

A good national soil conservation policy should:

- Maintain Canadian soils at maximum fertility.
- Provide the purest possible water supplies for all purposes in Canada.

- Provide the most nutritious unpolluted food possible for all Canadians and our customers abroad.
- Develop programs that will make Canada as self-sufficient as possible in food production at the farm, community provincial and national level.
- Develop the healthiest possible environment for rural people to live and work in.
- Establish more people on the land, both as farmers and farm workers, to reduce unemployment.
- Reduce fossil fuel energy inputs into agriculture.

— Elmer Laird, president  
Back to the Farm Research Foundation

August 24, 1998 Davidson Leader

Seventy-six year old Rosella Diduck, chemical widow, certified organic farmer and environmental activist, farms at Kamsack, SK. Fifteen years ago her husband, John, was applying anhydrous ammonia nitrogen fertilizer to a fifty-acre field on their farm. He had a breakdown with the equipment and had to walk to the house. The field he walked across was oozing anhydrous ammonia gas and when he got to the house he told Rosella, "I almost didn't make it."

Four years later on April 1, 1987, John Diduck died as a result of the effects of anhydrous ammonia to his lungs. Rosella was faced with the choice of becoming "bitter" or "better". She had watched her husband struggle for breath over the last ten days of his life through the result of chemically damaged lungs.

The medical doctor said his lungs were like paper and would no longer function. The death certificate showed the cause of death to be pneumonia. There was no mention of exposure to toxic agriculture chemicals. We have used agricultural chemicals here for fifty years and yet there is no mandatory requirement under the Saskatchewan Health and Safety Act and Regulations to list death or poisoning from agriculture chemicals as a "notifiable accident" the way other types of farm accidents are recorded.

The medical doctor who attended John at that time expected Rosella to sue the chemical company for compensation. However, Rosella decided it would very likely be an exercise in futility, knowing how much chemical companies will spend on legal fees defending their reputation. She said, "I didn't want to spend the rest of my life in court." Shortly after John's death Rosella publicly declared that she was a "chemical widow." Small towns on the prairies have quite a few chemical widows. Some of them realize what caused their husband's death, some don't. None are as vocal as Rosella. When I asked them why they aren't more vocal their responses are the same, "My husband is gone, what is the use?"

Rosella said following her husband's death, "John and I often talked about going into organic farming, now it is too late for John." However, it wasn't too late for Rosella. She decided to turn their 640-acre farm over to organic production.

She hired neighbours to seed all the cultivated acres to alfalfa to improve the soil and wait the four years for "certification". She sold the alfalfa hay crop in the field. Two years ago she decided to start growing annual certified organic crops. She rented the land to a young neighbour and together they plan the crop production for the year. This year they are growing peas, oats and alfalfa.

Rosella and John grew up in the Kamsack district. They were married in 1951 and moved to the present farm in 1953. They have two children, Angela who is a nurse in the Rocky View Hospital in Calgary and Glen who has his own accounting firm in Calgary.

Since John's death Rosella has spent a lot of time researching organic farming methods. In Canada both federal and provincial Departments of Agriculture promote chemical agriculture only. Agriculture Extension Services provide very little information on organic farming even though all taxpayers pay for them. The main way to find information on organic farming is to talk to other organic farmers. She has also become active in women's organizations. She joined the Saskatchewan Farm Women's

Agriculture Network in 1989 and Prairie Cronies, an older women's network. She spends a lot of time lobbying for "clean air, pure (unpolluted) water and organic wholesome food."

In 1994 she attended the first International Farm Women's Conference at Melbourne, Australia. In June, 1998, she attended the second International Farm Women's conference which was held the last week of June in Washington, DC. Rosella travels to these conferences at her own expense to lobby for what she believes in. Her lobbying effort and turning their farm into a certified organic farm is obviously a more useful and personally rewarding experience than fighting a losing battle in a court of law.

Over the years Rosella has become involved in a program sponsored by the University of Regina and the Department of National Health and Welfare. This included creating Prairie Cronies, Older Women's Network and Intercultural Grandmothers Uniting. All the groups are dedicated to improving quality of life. Older women are concerned about the environment, the demise of rural communities, the phasing out of small farms, the corporate farms that are taking on more land and the promotion of large cattle and hog operations. Having survived the "Depression" and World War II, older women view with alarm the debt load to get a higher education. Rosella concluded, "In World War II people gave their lives so their offspring could have a quality of life, an affordable education, adequate Medicare and affordable housing."

April 10, 1995 Davidson Leader

Decisions, decisions, decisions. What crops should I grow this year? Never since I started farming in 1946 (forty-nine years ago) have there been such a multitude of factors to consider in deciding what crops to seed. On the economic side, farmers have lost the "Crow Benefit" which will double the freight rate on rail shipments after August 1st. It will certainly have an effect on the "take home pay" received for high volume crops like wheat and barley. They have lost Sask. Pool. Pool dividends to producers were cut on January 1, 1995. This may make a difference where grain, oil seeds and legumes are delivered this year or where supplies are purchased. Farmers are also faced with a large number of decisions about producer contracts that are available for a multitude of crops or they might decide to grow without a contract and take a chance on the market in the fall.

If they are growing wheat there is the impending threat of wheat midge. If growing canola, a four year rotation is recommended to attempt to prevent attacks by the Diamond Backed Moth and the Bertha Army Worm. Then there is the Flea Beetle which the rotation doesn't influence. Peas and lentils may suffer from attacks by various fungi.

It is obvious a rotation is in order but it may be difficult to get a rotation worked out to accommodate all crops a farmer might want to grow and work it in with last years cropping program.

Then there is the question of rain and spring and fall frost which we don't have any control over. About the only thing we don't have to worry about this year is grasshoppers.

We often hear farmers talking about their budget (mostly that it is shot to hell). However, rarely do they ever mention their long range plan for soil conservation and rebuilding. Dick Mayer, Professor of Environmental Studies, Western Washington University refers to it as "Soil Ethic". In a recent paper he Quotes an unnamed farmer as follows, "It is my wish to leave the soils in a condition better than when I started. Agribusiness doesn't have a soil ethic, but many farmers do; they hope one day to leave their farm to their children and grandchildren. They want future harvests grains, fruits, vegetables, and other crops to contain micronutrients like copper, molybdenum, cobalt, zinc and chromium, not simply an abundance of macro- nutrients like nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. The use of chemical fertilizers alone supplies macro-nutrients but not many micro-nutrients."

Evelyn Potter, of Biggar, who was the first Women's President of the National Farmers Union used to frequently say, "We have not inherited our land from our ancestors, we have borrowed it from our children to use. We should pass it on in better condition than we found it."

Chris Holm was a soil specialist with Saskatchewan Agriculture in the late 1950's. Farm Management was being promoted by the provincial government at that time. They hired Agriculture Economist Jake Brown (later Dean of Agriculture at U of S) as director of farm management. Chris Hobo argued that a soil inventory measuring the fertility of the soil should be included in the farm inventory. Brown's management program was based on a program developed by Agriculture Economist, Jim Clark, at

Kindersley. I am sorry to say Chris Hobo's program was rejected by most young farmers because at that time they didn't have sufficient interest in and knowledge of the soil.

In 1955 the Veterans' Land Administration called a meeting in Davidson. Their Soil Specialist told veterans attending the meeting, "to maintain soil fertility it is important to keep one sixth of your land in grass and legumes at all times. Whether you harvest the hay or let it rot in the field doesn't matter." I, along with many others, ignored his advice at that time. However, forty years later I know it was the best advice on soil conservation and fertility ever received since I started farming.

I realize now that if I had followed that advice the soil on my farm would be at peak fertility today. I know that over the years I would have enjoyed more production because I would have been working more fertile soil. Since that time Con Campbell, a researcher at the Canada Agriculture station at Swift Current has researched the fibre returned to the soil particularly by alfalfa and clover roots. He confirms what the V.L.A. Soil Specialist told us in 1955.

Soil specialists have been reporting for many years that after fifty years of farming prairie soils, fifty percent of the fertility is lost. No one even relates the loss of nutrition in the food to the loss of fertility in the soil. Plants depend on soil nutrients to grow; we depend on the nutrients the plants provide us with to maintain health. Commercial fertilizers contribute very little to the nutrients in the soil. We need to work with Mother Nature to replace them.

I hesitate to mention it, but have you considered the "Land Ethic" when you planned your 1995 cropping program? The questions are, what kind of fertility would you like your soils to have five, ten or twenty years down the road when you might want to sell the farm, retire, or pass it on to your children. Concerns about environmental pollution are growing. In the United States, bankers are reluctant to lend money for the purchase of a chemically polluted farm.

The demand for certified organic products is growing very rapidly. Everywhere organic marketers are unable to fill their orders this year. Chemical costs are rapidly increasing. To use the term "hedge your bets" perhaps it is time to move half your farm to organic production so four years down the road you can move into the organic market. It would be an important contribution to your "soil ethic" and to the health of future generations.

April 19, 1999 Davidson Leader

Some farmers are considering going organic this spring because of the high cost of chemical and fertilizer inputs and low prices for chemically produced crops. It will mean not only a change in philosophy but it will also be challenging, interesting, rewarding (not necessarily in monetary terms) and healthier. Chemical farmers are out to control Mother Nature. Organic farmers try to work with Mother Nature. Mother Nature is on many occasions a very forceful and determined "Old Girl" but personally I would rather have her on my side than try to be working against her or control her. The problem arises in trying to figure out in advance what she is going to do so I can work with her or get her to help me out farming. Over the years she has done quite a good job of preserving the earth's resources for all of earth's species in spite of man activities from the smallest micro-organism in the soil to the elephant, whale and eagle.

Many farmers have sixth sense or a built intuition about what Mother Nature has planned for the coming year. They seem to know whether to seed early or late to make the most of the rains or avoid frost. Casper Dietz who farmed along the Girvin-Elbow road years ago about half way to Elbow had a reputation for having that built in sixth sense.

He wasn't the only one, many more farmers at that time were very observant of nature, as a result they had good weed control by cultivation, many seeded by the moon or even bought copies of the Moon Sign Book or the Farmer's Almanac.

Chemical farmers apply a "Marathon" approach to seeding. As soon as the soil is dry they are busy seeding about 26 hours a day until they have the crop in the ground. Chemical farmers moving to organic production need to abandon their "marathon" instinct and take into consideration weed growth, soil temperature and any other factors that will permit them to seed a particular crop at the most opportune time. For example, chemical farmers pack and harrow their crops immediately when they have finished seeding. They are going to control the weed growth with chemicals. They want to pack the ground as soon as possible to keep it from drying out. Organic farmers wait to harrow and pack until just before the crop comes up so they can get another swipe at the weeds. If the crop is weedy after it comes up they may harrow it again for weed control.

Chemical companies seem to be very worried this year that chemical farmers are going organic. Usually there is very little advertising of agriculture chemicals in late fall or early in the new year. This year the chemical company advertising has been going all out since the first of the year. I never could understand the reason for all the advertising. If their products are so good or important they shouldn't need to be advertised at all. The cost of advertising is added to the cost of the product. The farmer pays for the advertising that encourages him to use that particular chemical product.

In the past chemical advertising started about the first to the middle of March. The spring season is the most insecure time of the year for farmers. They don't know if it is going to be too wet or too dry, will the seed germinate, will the equipment break down, will the bank kick through with a loan, what will prices be like in the fall, or will there be a surplus. There are many reasons for uncertainty in the spring and chemical companies know farmers need to be reassured by advertising that is important to buy their products.

What many chemical farmers are unaware of is the fact there are practically no agriculture research or extension services for organic farmers. The best source of information is other organic farmers.

More progressive countries like Holland and Denmark have been graduating specialists in organic agriculture for many years. It is possible in either of those countries to graduate in both chemical and organic agriculture. Here in Saskatchewan both the college and school of agriculture graduate students in chemical agriculture only. In fact in Canada the federal and all provincial governments except British Columbia have a policy to support chemical agriculture only. British Columbia has a provincial organic certification program for organic agriculture.

Chemical farmers in their seeding program use a one crop at a time approach without much concern about the relationship between crops and crops or crops and weeds with few exceptions, e.g. don't seed wheat twice in a row because of wheat midge, chemical build up, etc. Organic farmers spend a lot of time thinking about the characteristics and the relationship between crops and crops and crops and weeds, e.g. cereal crops, in order of competitiveness or have the most resistance to weeds, are rye oats, barley and wheat. Flax is not very competitive. Mustard and canola are pretty good after the ground is shaded. Peas seeded with oats are very competitive. The old timers used to say, "I seeded a crop of rye to clean up the land."

Today we call it allelopathy. The science of allelopathy which is relatively underdeveloped is the study of plants and their relationship to each other and the means they use to compete for their place in the sun. We know that rye, oats, peas and sunflowers give off a toxin that discourages the growth of broad leaf weeds. Some plants compete by branching out, others with their root system. Dr. Ewan Coxworth, biologist formerly with the Saskatchewan Research Council, (son of Morley Coxworth Q.C. who practised law in Davidson for many years) has been a leading researcher in the science of allelopathy. Coxworth has produced three studies in the last few years that are important to organic farmers to help them plan crop rotations to control weeds and build up soil fertility. They are:

Natural Herbicides and Plant Growth Regulators in Canola and Sweet Clovers Residues, final report 1990.

Allelopathy (Naturally Occurring Herbicides) in Agriculture and Forestry, 1991.

Allelopathic Chemicals in Plants; Naturally Occurring Herbicides and Plant Growth Stimulants, 1985. For more information contact the library at the Saskatchewan Research Council.

Demand for organic products is growing around the world as was shown in the United Nations FAO report published last week. Prices are increasing for organic products and marketing methods are improving. Certified organic agriculture has a promising future.



February 20, 1995

About ten or twelve years ago the organization "Ten Years For World Development" held a meeting in Davidson. The speaker was from Guatemala. He said that in the flat fertile land of Guatemala they had the perfect nutritional balance in their cropping practises. To maintain soil fertility they grew a crop rotation of corn, beans and pumpkins. They had been growing the same crops for 2000 years and the soil fertility remained unchanged. However, they also had other important factors like approximately the same annual rainfall, same temperature and no frost. They are close to the equator and have about the same number of daylight hours all through the year.

On Monday, February 13, 1995, about thirty local farmers attended the Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food Extension Services Seminar held at the Davidson Field House. The seminar on soil fertility was one of the many being held in Saskatchewan during winter months. Speakers were Lany Graminak, Sask. Agriculture and Food, Saskatoon, Professor Les Henry, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Dr. Rigas Karamanos, Plains Innovative Laboratory Services, Saskatoon and Brandon Green, Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food, Regina. Our local Extension Agrologist, Marilyn Ruzkowski organized, chaired the meeting and introduced the guests. This kind of meeting would not be necessary in Guatemala because they do not have the "variables" we have such as late spring and early fall frost, cool, wet and hot, dry springs, wet and dry harvest, rainfall that varies from 4 to 24 inches during the growing season and variable soil types even in one field. If there was one particular theme at the meeting it was the fact that all speakers were aware of the "variables".

Larry Graminak referred to the "variables" in introducing the Seminar. In addition to the ones that are controlled by nature he said farmers are growing a wider range of cereals, oil seeds and pulse crops in the province than ever before. He said that the nitrogen-protein interaction was important to quality in cereal grains. However, farmers must take the variables into account to get the best value from their fertilizer dollars.

Professor Henry discussed the application of fertilizer. He said care must be taken in the method of application. More fertilizer could be applied when the "deep banding" system of placing fertilizer between the rows of grain was used. He cautioned that with "surface application" or "seed placement" systems, less fertilizer should be used because too much may destroy the crop. He showed slides of test plots where too much and too little was used. He said the safe thing to do was to error on the side of not applying enough. He discussed the "variables" in relation to fertilizer application: He said there was a definite relationship between the amount of nitrogen fertilizer applied and the protein content of cereal grains. Dr. Henry said no research had been done to his knowledge about the rate of nitrogen fertilizer in relation to the falling number (gluten measurement) of cereal grains. (Gluten content determines the ability of the bread to rise.)

Brandon Green discussed micro- nutrients in the soil. He is the author of a new "Farm Facts" sheet published by Saskatchewan Agriculture entitled "Organic Crop Production and Organic Fertilization" that is available at all Rural Development Centers. He is firmly convinced that soil testing is an important tool in farm management. Working with slides he also demonstrated that by looking at colors of plants in the growing season, shortages of nutrients could be detected. In the brochure he discusses

organic methods of supplying nutrients such as: (1) Applying animal manure; (2) Green manuring (growing legumes and working them down); (3) Growing legumes in rotation; (4) Rotating high and low nutrient demand crops; (5) Applying organically acceptable fertilizers; (6) Use of registered nutrient solubilizing microbial inoculants, such as provide; (7) Summerfallowing. Mr. Green is firmly convinced that agriculture research has to go beyond soil fertility and the growing of crops - it must relate soil nutrients to the nutrition of the food on the consumer's table. He is concerned about the nutrients that get lost in between.

Dr. Karamanos showed a number of slides of nitrogen levels in the soil since 1928 when the first measurements were taken until present. The slides showed nutrient levels in both the one foot and two foot levels. He also showed slides of a soil test study on a level uniform field in the Rosetown area. They took one hundred soil tests on a mile-long one hundred acre field. If they mixed the samples the soil test showed that no nutrients were required. However in certain areas of the field, individual soil tests showed that nutrients were required. Dr. Karamanos has been soil testing in R.M.s 252, 253 and 282. He discussed moisture nutrient reaction. Using a small computer he demonstrated yield predictions based on moisture at time of seeding, nutrients applied and average summer rainfall.

In the past there have been deep philosophical differences between organic farmers on one hand and most agricultural researches and extension workers on the other. The differences didn't seem to be nearly as prevalent at the Davidson meeting. The question is are the differences disappearing or are we just mellowing with age?

December 11, 2000 Davidson Leader

There is little doubt the early European and U.S. settlers in Canada enjoyed a full complement of nutrients in everything they ate and their good health reflected it, Nature has a built in system of recycling nutrients which native tribes for many centuries participated in fully.

However, with the arrival of homesteaders and their devotion and worship of technology, concern about returning nutrients to the soil rapidly vanished. Today, to my knowledge, no one is doing research on how to make sure the nutrients in the soil all end up in the food on the consumer's table.

In fact in an article in the June 1999 edition of *The Rams Horn* well noted environmentalist Brewster Keen quoted a Montreal dietitian Ms. Bernier. She said "About half the people admitted to Canadian hospitals are malnourished, and their situation tends to grow worse during and after their hospital stay. Food has to be considered as an integral part of the treatment process but increasingly—and budget cuts have an effect here—food is being considered as nothing more than an auxiliary service, like laundry."

There are many reasons nutrients in the soil are not reaching the consumer's table. Following are a few of them:

### **Example 1**

Harry Jurke, a Lloydminster, Sask. farmer, told me that in the economic crisis of the early 1970s he went into raising sheep. However, he had problems with "white muscle disease" which is really birthing problems. Selenium is recognized as a treatment for white muscle disease. One day he was going to spread commercial nitrogen fertilizer on his sheep pasture. His neighbour asked him why he was doing that. He said he didn't know so he didn't do it. He said that in a couple of years he no longer had birthing problems with his sheep. However, he didn't know why. He said a few years later he met a veterinarian that told him that commercial nitrogen fertilizer wouldn't permit the selenium in the soil to be released to the plant and that is why the sheep had white muscle disease. Selenium is a very necessary mineral in the diet for many reasons but particularly to protect and enhance the immune system. Canadian farmers use millions of dollars worth of commercial nitrogen every year and Canadian consumers buy a lot of selenium at health food stores.

### **Example 2**

Traditionally wheat was milled into flour by water driven or hand cranked stone mills. Stone milling is the only process that saves all the nutrients in the wheat. It grinds the wheat slowly enough to prevent the wheat germ (wheat germ is vitamin E) from going rancid. There are many home size "stone mills" and a few commercial-sized mills that will produce (hopefully certified organic) stone ground flour in the community.

However, the large commercial mills produce mostly white flour (often bleached) with practically no nutrients left in it. In fact because of its lack of nutrition the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Department of Health, insist the following five nutrients be added: thiamin (0.64 milligrams per 100 grams), riboflavin (0.4mg per 100 g), niacin (5.3 mg per 100 g), folic acid (0.15 mg per 100 g) and iron (4.4 mg per 100 g).

It's very sad to think here on the prairies where we produce some of the highest quality wheat in the world, the nutrients don't get to the consumer's table.

### **Example 3**

In 1969 I met a dairy farmer from Trenton, Ont. at the founding convention of the National Farmers Union in Winnipeg, I asked her what breed of cows she had. She said "I have a herd of prize Jersey cattle that produce the highest quality milk possible." However, I am sorry to tell you that because the Department of Health insists the milk must be pasteurized a lot of the calcium and other nutrients are destroyed. Over the years I have heard this from many other sources. European countries have had certified whole milk (not pasteurized) on the market for many years.

However, it is only lately that a few Ontario and Quebec farmers have been able to market certified whole milk and more recently certified organic whole milk. Unfortunately, mothers have been telling their children "drink lots of milk so you will have lots of calcium in your diet" but unfortunately the calcium hasn't been there.

My dog "Po" is a very good and determined nutritionist and recycler.

Po is quite a big dog, he is a cross between a Norwegian elkhound and a Chinese chow. Mother nature has programmed Po and all other dogs that have access to gardens and yards to recycle the nutrients in their food. When you give them a bone they may eat it all and if they do they deposit their waste back on the soil. If it is a big bone, they may eat some and bury what they don't eat because they know they must return the calcium and other nutrients to the soil.

However, if humans were ever programmed to recycle nutrients, they have forgotten. Today our food products go to large population centres and the surplus nutrients pass through the consumers body and with the help of flush toilets and rivers the nutrients go out to sea.

However, most humans don't eat the bones and they carefully put them in the garbage. The bones go out to the garbage dump. The rats in the garbage dump have a good supply of calcium.

However, many people suffer from osteoporosis and other illnesses because there is a shortage of calcium in their diets.

Acres U.S.A, *A Voice For Eco-Agriculture* is a very good environmental organic agricultural newspaper published in Austin, Texas. They publish a list of weeds to help farmers and gardeners do a soil analysis.

Weeds will indicate soil problems, e.g., dandelions indicate a "low calcium content" and organic matter not decomposing. It's time we all listened to what the dandelions in our gardens and fields are telling us about nutrition.

October 4, 1999 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:  
Mrs. Doris McKenzie, editor, Laird Family History

Dear Cousin Doris:  
Re: Uncle Walt continued:

Uncle Walt (Walter, most of the time called Red) was a great nutritionist although I doubt if he would know the meaning of the word. So was his brother Uncle Huck (Charles) and all farmers prior to the end of the Second World War when agriculture started moving into the technological age. As you are aware our two unmarried uncles, Walter and Lee, lived with our grandmother 25 miles south of Swift Current until she died in 1955. A big event in my life was being able to ride horseback and later walk the five miles when we no longer had a riding horse to travel to Grandma Laird's to stay over night. Grandma never seemed to be out of pie and cake

In the morning Uncle Walt got up first and started making a fire in the coal and wood stove in the kitchen. Thinking back it is obvious that Uncle Walt was the self-appointed foreman on the homestead. As soon as he was up building the fire he started hollering, "Jack (Lee) get up and swill the hogs." Jack enjoyed laying in bed where it was warm until the house warmed up. As time went on Uncle Walt's "swill" became louder and sounded more like swill-il-il. Sometimes it varied to, "Jack, slop the hogs." In those early years all farmers had a slop pail. All the dish water, water drained off the vegetables after cooking, vegetable and food scraps went into the slop pail and was poured over the oat or barley chop fed to the hogs. Farmers in those early years were experts in recycling programs that environmental groups are struggling to introduce today.

Egg shells went back to the chicken house which returned the calcium to where it was needed. Bones were fed to the dogs who deposited the calcium in the bones all over the yards and fields where ever dogs decided to make a deposit. There was a very close nutritional relationship between hogs, chickens and people. Chickens scratched in the dirt and hogs rooted. Today the term is free- range chickens and hogs. The hogs and chickens found traces of minerals and nutrients that kept them healthy without supplementing their feed rations with antibiotics, minerals or vitamins.

Farming in that era was much closer to Mother Nature's ecological cycle. Open herd laws, which permitted livestock to graze everywhere after the crop was harvested distributed a lot of the animal waste over the soil.

Barn manure was distributed over the land. Dr. Ross Hume Hall, author of Food for Naught the Decline in Nutrition (published in 1974) states in his book that the urine from animals wandering over the fields replaces a soil bacteria that is very necessary to a healthy soil. Wild animals and fowl recycle everything as well.

Ernie Symons, known as the "oil can man" from Rocanville, Sask. because he manufactured over three million oil cans for the military during the Second World War made a small hand crank grinder to grind up all the bones coming from his kitchen.

He spread them on the garden to return the calcium. He was the exception, most of the bones and egg shells today go in the garbage and then to the landfill. Osteoporosis

is rapidly increasing in people due to a shortage of calcium in today's food, but the rats in the garbage dump no doubt have a bountiful supply.

Today the nutrients in the swill or slop go down the sewer and out into the lakes and rivers and on to the sea.

Human waste in the main that contains nutrients (Animals pass on 55 to 60 per cent of their nutrients I have never seen a report on humans yet) with a few exceptions goes into rivers and lakes out to the sea.

Here in Saskatchewan the few exceptions are communities like Davidson that use all the effluent from their sewerage lagoons to irrigate hay crops and return nutrients to the soil.

In addition to losing nutrition in the many ways I have described, food processing in the main is not concerned about preserving nutrients in processed food, in fact the Vitamin E in the wheat germ that is removed when milling white flour for bread and pastries no doubt find its way back to the shelves of Health Food stores in Vitamin E capsules.

Dr. Hall in his book said, "I am attacking the use of agricultural chemicals to produce larger crops, fatter livestock and better textured, tenderer food — not because the chemicals are dangerous in themselves, but because they destroy basic nutritional values." Today we line up at the health food store trying to guess what nutrients we need for an unidentified health problem.

Well Doris, Uncle Walt and Uncle Huck and their farmer neighbours around the world sure did a good job of supplying nutrition. They had to keep us healthy because there was little money for medical bills during the Depression.

In fact, they did such a good job of supplying nutrition that medical doctors never studied nutrition in medical colleges until recently.

Good luck with the family history.

Elmer

September 14, 1998 Davidson Leader

On Friday, September 4, 1998, at one o'clock as prearranged, I went to Sutherland School at Egbert Avenue and 111th Street, Sutherland (Saskatoon), to pick up my vermicomposting kit. The school secretary, Ms. Dianne Colter, while making out the receipt for \$40.00 for the kit, suggested that I should meet the school's composting director, Mr. Ed Erickson. Mr. Erickson is a kindergarten teacher and also a ventriloquist. (I am sure the kindergarten students enjoy his two puppets, Danny and Tarra) The school promotes composting as both an environmental project and as a way to make money for student projects.

Ms. Colter led the way down a long hallway and we waited while the kindergarten students sang "O Canada" and said the Lord's Prayer. Then Mr. Erickson told the kids they could play for five minutes while he briefed me on composting.

I was sent to Sutherland School by Ms. Allison Brady at the Saskatchewan Environmental Society office at 203 - 115 - 2nd Avenue North in Saskatoon who briefed me later and also supplied more information on composting. Ms. Brady is their worm expert. Both Mr. Erickson and Ms. Brady said they would welcome an opportunity to speak to anyone interested in vermicomposting.

Mrs. Rosella Diduck, Kamsack, attended the "Second International Conference On Women In Agriculture" last June in Washington, DC. She said that one of the speakers at the conference, Ms. Carolyn Thomas of the AME Church in south side Chicago, reported on the vermicomposting program they have in large, low-income apartment buildings. The project is supported by the Heifer Foundation. It started with a breakfast program for low-income kids and the composting program followed to look after the scraps. Completing the cycle, the proceeds from the sale of the compost material are then used to fund the continuation of the breakfast program.

Vermicomposting is a natural process where kitchen and yard wastes decompose into a dark, nutrient-rich, earthy-smelling soil conditioner. Perhaps you've considered backyard composting but live in high rise or don't relish the thought of tramping through your garden the middle of a winter blizzard. If so, vermicomposting is the option for you.

The worms are red wigglers, thus named because they squirm if you pick them up. They can eat and expel their own weight every day. They consume their own bedding and your indoor food wastes once the microorganisms living in the soil have initiated the process breaking down the organic material. The combination of loam and food wastes will pass through the worm's body as many as eight to ten times before being harvested.

Provided they are given proper food and protection, your red wigglers will thrive and multiply.

Vermicomposting is simply composting with worms. The best kind of earthworm to use is the redworm. These worms are incredible garbage eaters. Even a small bin of redworms will yield pounds of rich, sweet-smelling compost. Finished compost can be harvested in as little as two to three months. Redworms (aka "red wigglers") are extremely prolific. It takes about three weeks for fertilized eggs to develop in a cocoon from which two or more young worms can hatch. In three months the worms are sexually mature and will start breeding. Within a year you'll be able to give worms away to get a friend started!

A steady supply of food in the form of kitchen wastes is necessary to maintain the health of your worms.

Egg shells are needed to maintain the bedding at a safe pH level. Without them the bedding may become too acidic.

Foods to be avoided include meat and fish as these foods will cause odours and attract insects and larger pests. You might wish to keep a small air-tight container or “vermifeeder” in the kitchen to collect your table scraps. Microorganisms (bacteria) will begin to work on the foodwastes while they are in the “vermifeeder” and make them into an ideal meal for your pets.

Red wigglers will survive in temperatures from 40 to 90 degrees Fahrenheit but the ideal temperature for them is between 60 and 80 degrees.

The finished compost or worm castings will be ready to harvest within one and one-half to three and one-half months, maximum. Castings look like minuscule black pellets.

To harvest the castings simply dump the bin onto a large surface covered with a plastic sheet. Spread the bedding into separate, multiple mounds with a bright light overhead. Red wigglers dislike intense light and will tunnel into the centre of the old bedding (now worm castings).

Whisk away the top and side layers of castings. The centre or mass of worms (looks like red spaghetti) is now placed with a spatula into new bedding to start the composting process anew.

At some point, with all the baby worms being born, you may decide there are too many worms for your original vermicomposter. You could find a new home for them in an additional vermicomposter, in an outdoor composter or give them to friends to stall their own composter.

The harvested compost or worm castings can be added to the potting soil around your house plants or to the soil in your garden in a mixture of one part castings to one part soil. The castings can also be used as a “medication” for sick house plants. First, you should remove one to two inches of potting soil, being careful not to disturb the roots of the plant. Replenish the soil with worm castings. This procedure has been known to effect “cures” on most sick plants.

For more information, Mr. Ed Erickson can be contacted at 306-683-7460 or Ms. Allison Brady at 06-665-1915.



September 6, 1993 Davidson Leader

### **The Bio-computer can tell whether soil has been farmed organically**

Dale Doram, M.Sc., a Calgary based agricultural consultant inspected my farm a couple of weeks ago. He is a certification inspector for Canadian Prairie Organic Cooperative Ltd. Success, Saskatchewan. The Co-operative was organized for the purpose of providing "third party" certification services to organic farmers who want to market their products organically. "Third party" means that the inspector has no vested interest in either buying or selling certified organic products and is in a position to make an unbiased appraisal of the farm or garden. When the National Organic Certification regulations are in place there is little doubt that "third party" certification will be legally incorporated into Federal Agricultural Certification Regulations. Certified Organic Products will then have the same legal status as Certified Seed Grain.

Doram, who is owner of the consulting firm Abundant Growth Inc., grew up on a farm at Lomond, Alta. He has a B.A. of Science in Agriculture and a Masters degree in the Science of Soil Science. He moved to Saskatchewan about ten years ago because of his interest in organic agriculture which had advanced more rapidly here than in Alberta. He moved back to Calgary three years ago because organic agriculture is well on the way in Alberta. His consulting firm is involved in organic certification, agricultural consulting work and research. He is pioneering a field of research I had not heard of previously -- the scientific measurement of "vitality".

Last year he published a study entitled, "A New Paradigm In Health And Nutrition" which is a study on measuring the "vitality" of foods. We have talked about vitality for centuries, but I for one, was not aware that it could be measured scientifically until Tread the report.

Doram says, "Vitality is sometimes spoken of in terms of freshness of food. We have all experienced eating home grown food in the summer and marvelling at the flavour and freshness of the food. In the past we have used a chemical analysis to measure nutrition in food. The vitality measurement is important because the consumption of synthetic herbs (drugs), vitamins, and improperly processed foods lowers the vitality of the person consuming them because the human digestive system and the cells of the body are not designed to accept synthetic substances."

He went on to say, "One source of vitality is from eating plants. Plants gather solar energy from the sun through the process of photosynthesis. As a part of the growing process, plants capture and store vitality that can add to our own vitality when we consume them. Vitality is a separate measurement from nutrition. Vitality measurements and nutritional measurements in food may not directly correspond to each other."

In his report he demonstrates that freshly juiced carrots have about forty times the vitality the juice has two hours later. Bread baked from stone ground whole wheat flour has 25% more vitality than bread baked from commercial whole wheat bread and about two hundred times the vitality of bread baked from white flour. Organic milk has three times as much vitality as conventional milk, organic cherries have over five times the vitality of conventionally grown cherries. Organic broccoli has 150 times as much vitality as conventionally grown broccoli.

Doram says, “The Bio-computer can tell whether soil has been farmed organically or chemically. Toxic agricultural chemicals destroy the vitality of the soil and the food produced from it.” He is convinced that monitoring vitality in the fields of nutrition, agriculture, and the environment offers to revolutionize our understanding of the workings of nature as well as what impact man’s activities have on our planet. It is obvious that the science of monitoring “vitality” is essential for our survival on this polluted planet.

August 22, 2005 Davidson Leader

### **Crops in organic test plot shaping up well**

The Back To The Farm Research Foundation has four farmer directors: Don Robertson, Liberty; Lorne Dean, Davidson; Wayne Morrison, Davidson; and Blair Edwards, Bladworth. If I need advice on any problem, I consult them. Back in July, I became aware that we had a heavy infestation of Wild Millet (very competitive weed) in the 20 acres seeded to hemp.

On the evening of July 27, Lorne Dean and Don Robertson did an inspection of the test plots of our research and demonstration farm. Morrison and Edwards were unable to come. The one question I particularly asked them was: Should we cut the hemp with the heavy infestation of Wild Millet for hay or should we wait for the hemp to mature? Following is their report:

The plots are in very good condition with excellent growth progress in all of them. They indicate further proof that timely rains combined with seeding at the proper time are all important in growing crops in Saskatchewan and with no set backs from here on in they should all yield satisfactorily. We have noted some interesting conditions in some of the intercropping experiments however, that we will point out in the detailed plot reports.

Plot 1: 60 acres of Alfalfa- Timothy mix, seeded in 1997. Good growth with a fairly even mix of both crops. This will make excellent animal feed when baled and will provide good revenue for the farm.

Plot 2: 60 acres seeded to various crops as follows: 1. 20 acres of Spelt on the southeast side. Clean crop with very good stand. When you consider the good prices offered for this product it should be a real money maker for the farm. 2. 20 acres of Finola Hemp on southwest side. A fairly good stand of hemp, but it has been thinned out by a heavy infestation of wild millet as well as Indian mustard on the south end and some stink weed and clover through the rest of it. The heavy growth of millet is puzzling because this is the only plot that shows much evidence of wild millet and the plots adjacent to it have none. This makes one wonder if the millet seed was introduced with the hemp seed. We were of two minds whether to recommend baling the crop for feed or harvest it for seed. We however, opted to harvest it for seed, bearing in mind the good price offered for the seed and the fair stand that should yield reasonably well. We recommend that the next crop grown on this plot be Fall Rye, as this is one of the best natural ways to eradicate wild millet from a field. 3. 10 acres of Neepawa wheat on the northeast corner. Good clean heavy stand. Will yield well. 4. 10 acres of Flax on the northwest corner. Good heavy stand of flax with some Indian mustard that shouldn't affect the yield to any large extent.

Plot 3: 10 acres of Flax- Lentils mix. Good stand of flax, very few lentils evident. Canada Thistle and Indian mustard growing all through the crop, but they don't seem to have thinned the flax to any great extent. There should be a good yield of flax, but we don't think there will be any significant amount of lentils.

Plot 4: 60 acres of Alfalfa and Timothy seeded in 1997. As in Plot 1, it will yield a lot of hay.

Plot 5: 60 acres - east 30 acres is summerfallow - west 30 acres equally divided between 10 acres of Oats and Peas mixed, 10 acres of Radish and 10 acres of Barley-Yellow Mustard mix. 1: Good stand of oats with few peas on the south 10 acres. Some alfalfa in the crop, but the oats should yield well. The peas will be very sparse. 2: 10 acres of radish in the center with some alfalfa growing through it - otherwise a good clean crop that should yield very well. 3: The north 10 acres are barley and yellow mustard. Both crops are doing very well and there should be a good harvest of both. They seem to be quite compatible.

Plot 6: 26 acres of Alfalfa and Timothy. This was in the process of being baled and should yield well.

Plot 9: 60 acres-north 30 acres seeded to Fall Rye in 2004 - a good stand of rye that is almost ready to harvest. Some grass in it, but otherwise weed free. It will yield and grade well. The south 30 acres seeded to rye and alfalfa, with the contemplation of cutting it for feed. Both crops are doing well and will make excellent feed. However, if the manager decides to harvest the rye for seed, it would yield well also.

Plots 7,8,10,11,12: All these plots as well as Plots 1, 4, and 6 have been seeded to various combinations of animal feeds and have been contracted out to farmers in the area to be cut and baled for hay. They are in the process of being harvested now, and all are yielding very well and will provide an important source of revenue for the farm.

Plot 1-60 acres of Alfalfa and Timothy seeded 1997; Plot 4 - 60 acres of Alfalfa and Timothy seeded 1997; Plot 6 - 26 acres of Alfalfa and Timothy seeded 1997; Plot 7 - 35 acres of Alfalfa seeded 1996; Plot 8-70 acres of crested wheat grass and alfalfa seeded in 1958; Plot 10 - 60 acres of Alfalfa and Timothy seeded 1997; Plot 11 - 45 acres of Alfalfa and Timothy seeded 1997; Plot 12- 10 acres of Alfalfa seeded 1997.

Note: Explanation of intercropping: intercropping means growing two or more crops in the same field at the same time for the purpose of: 1. controlling weeds; 2. controlling bugs; 3. improving the soil or perhaps all three if you can get the right combination. Example: oats and peas will control weeds, barley and mustard will control Flea beetles and legumes will increase the nitrogen in the soil. If you are interested in a tour, phone 567-4260 soon for an appointment. Unless it stays wet, swathing will be in full swing this week.

Elmer Laird, president  
Back To The Farm  
Research Foundation

April 25, 1994 Davidson Leader

During the “great depression” or the “dirty thirties”, depending on the perspective of who is telling the story, prairie farmers were slowly converting from “horse power” to “tractor power”. I am sure that during that period (1930-40) in all the one room school houses in rural Saskatchewan there was at least one debate on the advantages and disadvantages of both horses and tractors as a source of farm power.

Proponents of horse power always stated very firmly “the farmer can raise the horses and the feed needed to fuel the horse power; with a tractor you have to buy both the tractor and fuel.”

Increasing numbers of today’s farmers are growing nitrogen fixing legumes for both feed and cash crops to eliminate the necessity of purchasing nitrogen fertilizer and increase soil fertility. Agricultural science and technology has produced legume inoculants to fix nitrogen several years ago. More recently they have developed an environmentally friendly seed treatment that will make more soil-bound phosphorus available to some legume and grain crops. There are some do’s and don’ts but with careful management, a farmer can be quite successful. One of the key elements is to make sure you have the right inoculators seed treatment for the right crop.

PhilomBios is a Saskatoon company that manufactures both legume inoculants and seed treatment. I asked Sanford C. Gleddie, M.Sc.P.Ag. of PhilomBios - Why do we need inoculants if legumes fix nitrogen on their own? He said, “Peas, lentils, soybeans, alfalfa and other legumes don’t need as much nitrogen fertilizer as other plants. In fact, they can add nitrogen to the soil that other crops can use. But they can’t do it on their own. They need particular kinds of bacteria, called Rhizobium, to do the actual work.”

He went on to say, “The Rhizobium bacteria in the inoculant have the unique ability to convert atmospheric nitrogen into compounds of nitrogen that growing crops can use. These bacteria form nodules on the roots of legumes. The nodules contain colonies of the nitrogen fixing bacteria that enable legumes to grow in solid where there is little or no available nitrogen.

Gleddie said, “Rhizobium bacteria live in most soils. In western Canada, however, there aren’t enough of them to fix nitrogen efficiently. An inoculant added to the seed ensures that nitrogen fixing can take place. The better the inoculant, the better your cropper- forms.”

Gleddie concluded, “Our inoculant contains two billion active Rhizobium bacteria per gram. They are mixed in finely ground peat moss. The peat moss and all packaging materials are sterilized to destroy any contaminants before the Rizobia bacteria are added. As a result they have no competition so they thrive.

Gleddie cautioned, “There is no point in using inoculant if you apply commercial nitrogen fertilizer at the same time. The plant will go to the easiest, most available source for its nitrogen supply. Chemical residues in your soil will destroy the effect of the Rhizobium bacteria and reduce nitrogen fixation.”

The company registered a new seed inoculant in 1990 for wheat called Provide. It is available this year for peas, lentils, and canola. The new seed treatment uses a bacteria to make some of the phosphorous that is bound up in the soil available to the plant. Gleddie cautions that if it was used several years in a row it might deplete the

phosphorous in the soil and sometime down the road chemical farmers would have to add commercial phosphorous and organic farmers would have to add rock phosphate.

Commercial fertilizer prices are soaring, sales are dropping, the questions are - 1) Will chemical farmers move to using more environmentally friendly products? 2) Will science continue to develop affordable products that replace the chemical ones?

April 7, 2003 Davidson Leader

### **Weeds are not all bad, they conserve soil and are edible too**

On Sunday, March 30, 2003 I counted four gophers in my yard. That is the most convincing sign of spring to date. However, on April 2 at time of writing it looks like winter again. Although I do think that spring is not far off and this is the time of the year farmers and gardeners are thinking about their soil and what they are going to seed. Following is a unique soil testing system I would like to share with you. Acres, U.S.A. is a monthly newspaper. It is published in Austin, Texas and calls itself "A Voice For Eco-Agriculture". Several years ago it published a chart showing how to do a soil analysis or soil test by examining the weeds that are growing in gardens or fields. Unfortunately (or fortunately), the weeds do not grow all at one time so anyone using the chart will have to save this article to check and see what weeds are growing all during the growing season. This is the list of "indicator weeds".

Here is what some of the common U.S. weeds tell about soil conditions (scientific names are in parentheses).

- ◆ **Bindweeds** (*Convolvulus*), crusted, tight soil, low humus.
- ◆ **Broomsedge** (*Andropogon virginicus*), depleted, oxidized soil, low in calcium and possibly magnesium, poor soil structure, possible over use of salt fertilizers.
- ◆ **Foxtail Barley** (*Hordeum jubatum*), wet soil, possibly high salts and low calcium, compaction, possibly acid, unavailable potassium and trace elements.
- ◆ **Common Burdock** (*Arctium minus*), high iron, acid, low calcium, also grows on high gypsum soil or from excess use of dolomite lime or ammonium sulfate plus lime.
- ◆ **Cheat, Chess** (*Bromus secalmus*), wet, compacted, puddled (fine particles, no crumb structure).
- ◆ **Chickweed** (*Stellaria media*), high organic matter at surface, low mineral content.
- ◆ **Chicory** (*Cichorium intybus*), fairly good soil, clay or heavy soil.
- ◆ **Cocklebur** (*Xanthium pennsylvanicum*), fairly good soil with high available phosphorus, but may be low available zinc.
- ◆ **Crabgrass** (*Digitaria sanguinalis*), tight, crusted soil, low calcium, inadequate decay of organic matter.
- ◆ **Dandelion** (*Taraxacum officinale*), low calcium, organic matter not decomposing.
- ◆ **Dock** (*Rumex*), wet, acid soils.
- ◆ **Fall Panicum** (*Panicum di c ho tom i flu ru m*), anaerobic, compacted soil.
- ◆ **Foxtail, Giant Foxtail** (*Setaria*), tight, wet soil, possibly high magnesium, seed germinates in anaerobic conditions (high carbon dioxide).
- ◆ **Horsenettle** (*Solanum dulcamara*), crusted soil, low humus.
- ◆ **Jimsonweed** (*Datura stramonium*), improper decomposition of organic matter (fermentation).
- ◆ **Johnsongrass** (*Sorghum halepense*), depleted soil, low organic matter, low calcium, possibly high iron.
- ◆ **Lamb's Quarters** (*Chenopodium album*), rich fertile soil, good decay of organic matter, high humus.

- ◆ **Common Milkweed** (*Asclepias syriaca*), good soil, generally grows in fallow areas.
- ◆ **Mustards** (Wild mustard, yellow rocket, wild radish, peppergrass, etc.) (*Brassica*, *Raphanus*, *Lepidium*), crust, hardpan, poor soil structure, poor drainage.
- ◆ **Nettles, Stinging Nettle** (*Urtica*), anaerobic, toxic soil, wrong decomposition of organic matter (fermentation).
- ◆ **Pigweeds** (*Amaranthus*), Redroot (Rough) Pigweed (*Amaranthus retroflexus*), good soil.
- ◆ **Purslane** (*Portulaca oleracea*), fairly good soil.
- ◆ **Quackgrass** (*Agropyron repens*), wet, anaerobic soil, high aluminum (toxic) in west low calcium and high magnesium and sodium.
- ◆ **Red Sorrel, Sheep Sorrel** (*Rumex acetosella*), acid soil, low calcium, low decomposition of organic matter.
- ◆ **Russian Thistle** (*Salsola kalt var temafoha*), salty soil (high sodium and potassium), low calcium and iron, low organic matter.
- ◆ **Smartweeds** (*Polygonum*), wet, poorly drained soil.
- ◆ **Thistles** (*Cirsium*) and Sowthistle (*Sonchus oleraceus*), fairly good soil.
- ◆ **Tumbleweed** (*Amaranthus albus*) (Russian thistle is also called a tumbleweed: see above), dry soil, low humus.
- ◆ **Velvetleaf** (Buttonweed) (*Albutilon theophrasti*), anerobic soil, wrong decay of organic matter (fermentation).

There is one weed I would like to add to the list - Wild Oats. Apparently, in the warmer growing season farther south, wild oats are not a problem and are not on the list.

However, I know from experience that wild oats are considered a problem here and will only grow in very fertile soil.

I have a book that you may be interested in. It is "Edible Garden Weeds of Canada", by Adam J. Szczawinski and Nancy J. Turner. It is Volume 1 of Canada's Edible Wild Plant series published by the Natural Museum of National Sciences. Following is a list of thirty-nine edible garden weeds. Very likely we won't have them all in this community, but for those who are interested in the study of plants or weeds they might find it quite interesting.

Couch grass, Barnyard grass, Green amaranth, Milkweeds, Common burdock, Chicory, Ox-eye daisy and English daisy, Thistles, Jerusalem artichoke, Wild lettuce, Nipplewort, Sow-thistle, Common dandelion, Salsify and goat's beards, Comfrey, Wild mustards, Shepherd's purse, Common peppergrass, Watercress, Common hedge mustard, Pennycress, Chickweed, Orache, Lamb's quarters, Red clover and white clover, Stork's-bill, Spearmint, Common mallow, Common evening-primrose, Yellow wood-sorrels, Common plantain, Tartary buckwheat, Giant knotweeds, Sheep sorrel, Dock, Miner's-lettuce, Purslane, Common bedstraw, Stinging nettle.

I don't see red root pig weed on the above list. However, in the last couple of years I have found it to be a very delicious food if it is boiled like spinach.

Red root pig weed is considered a wonderful product in China. It is grown in rural areas and hauled into the city to be sold at farmers markets. I know a number of people here find Dandelion delicious.



The book Edible Garden Weeds of Canada has two recipes for each weed. 1. How to make a salad out of it, and 2. How to cook it.

If anyone would like recipes for weeds, let me know and we can photocopy them for you. Does anyone have a book on what the Natives ate before the early settlers came?

I have another book "Weeds, Guardians of the Soil", by Joseph A. Cocannouer. It shows how weeds conserve the soil. Weeds are not all bad, they conserve the soil, they are edible and they help with soil analysis.

September 16, 1996 Davidson Leader

Open Letter To:  
Mr. David Ehman, Chairman and  
Members  
District #15 ADD Board  
Box 385  
Craik, SK SOG OVO

Dear Mr. Ehman:

Re: Research Proposals for consideration by District #15 ADD Board for 1997

Proposal #1 (continued): A) To examine nutrients (vitamins and minerals) in the soil to see if they are supplying adequate nutrition in the food on the consumer's table; B) Find out what improvements can be made; and C) Solve some weed control problems at the same time.

Last week I referred to an article in the 1936 edition of Cosmopolitan magazine by journalist Rex Beach who quoted Dr. Charles Northern of Orlando, Florida. Keep in mind that this was in 1936 when he said, "Most of us today are suffering from dangerous diet deficiencies. These cannot be remedied until the depleted soils from which our foods come are brought into proper mineral balance. The alarming fact is that foods, fruits, vegetables and grains are now being raised on millions of acres of land that no longer contain enough of certain needed minerals." (The article is reprinted in the August and September 1996 edition of Alive magazine.) The lengthy article discusses concerns about nutritional deficiencies in human and livestock food at that time.

Last week I listed thirty-one weeds and the soil conditions they indicate. It appears that Mother Nature has provided us with a very inexpensive system of soil testing if we can learn how to read her message.

There used to be an old saying in early western culture "We had to shoot someone to start a cemetery," (which was usually referred to as Boothill.) There may have been an element of truth in it because early settlers were eating food produced from Virgin Prairie that no doubt had maximum fertility. They enjoyed a very healthy diet even if it didn't have much variety. However, over the years, we have shipped large volumes of grain and livestock products that included large volumes of soil nutrients with them all over the world.

In nature's ecological cycle before the plough, animal and human waste was deposited close to where the food was consumed. Even the bones of large animals that were rich in calcium and other nutrients were left scattered across the prairie. Regina was originally called "Pile of Bones" because it started as a collection centre for bones. Today most bones (pork, beef and poultry) after the meat is removed end up in the garbage. There is little doubt that garbage dumps are rich in calcium from bones and egg shells. The excess nutrition in large volumes of grain, oil seeds, legumes, vegetables, meat and fruit that are shipped to large population centres that is not retained in the human body after eating (with the help of flush toilets) goes into rivers, lakes and eventually the sea.

The Chinese long ago established a “night soil” program to return all the excess nutrition in human waste to the soil.

There is little doubt that our soils are short of many nutrients and that nutrition in food is going to become increasingly more important in world markets. I am proposing that the District #15 ADD Board set up a research project to test for: 1) Mineral deficiencies on the “weed column” in last week’s paper to see if they are true indicators in our soils, i.e., if dandelions indicate a shortage of calcium we need to know sources of calcium and how to apply it; 2) Find out how we can use nutrients in crop rotations to rebuild our soils and improve the health of our customers at home and abroad.

Sincerely,  
Elmer Laird, President  
Back To The Farm Research Foundation

April 5, 2004 Davidson Leader

### **Solar greenhouse provides energy efficient food production**

Open letter to Connie Townsend and the members of Davidson and District Economic Development Board.

Finally after previous attempts, the executive of the Back To The Farm Research Foundation met on March 29 with Linda Pipke, executive director of the Saskatchewan Council for Community Development. The purpose of the meeting was to see if CARDS (Canadian Adaptation and Rural Development in Saskatchewan Program) would provide a grant for some of the new projects the Research Foundation is considering at this time. In addition to CARDS, the Saskatchewan Council for Community Development administers the Leadership Saskatchewan Program which is community based, Aims - Farm Business Management, Consensus Building - promoting leadership and consensus building workshops and Board Basis, to name a few.

The following proposals were discussed at the meeting:

1. Straw bale solar heated greenhouse.

We believe we should have self-sufficient communities and to do this we need farm, urban home or community energy efficient straw bale solar heated greenhouses so we can grow food year round. Elsewhere, on this page is a drawing of a straw bale solar heated greenhouse. It was designed by Bruce Steiner. We need to grow food all year and this type of energy efficient building would permit us to produce food with practically no energy and only labour cost. If we are going to live up to the Kyoto accord that was signed by the federal government about a year ago, we need to move to energy efficient food production wherever possible for at least three reasons: 1. It is obvious as energy sources disappear, the cost of operating transport trucks that haul green vegetables and fruits from California or Florida to Davidson will become prohibitive. 2. The so-called free trade agreement may end up in one of its usual "blockades" at the U.S./Canada border and we wouldn't have any green vegetables and fruits here. 3. The premier wants to keep people in Saskatchewan and we would be creating jobs here operating greenhouses instead of creating jobs in California growing fruits and vegetables.

2. Research a design for a pre-fab root cellar.

We would like to do research on a design for a prefab root cellar. We need three sizes to start out with, farm size, urban home size and community size to store vegetables in the winter that we grow in the summertime. Pre-fab means the frame structure would be manufactured in a regular manufacturing plant (hopefully in Davidson). Who ever bought one would get a backhoe to dig the suitable sized hole, put the pre-fab root cellar structure in place and cover it in half a day's time and it would be ready to store vegetables and fruits for a lifetime.

3. Straw bale solar heated farm shop.

This would help farmers by providing an energy efficient workshop to repair equipment in the winter time.

4. Pasture for certified organic sheep (30 acres).

We would like to demonstrate how sheep could be used to keep weeds and grass under control and provide certified organic mutton.

5. Establish a pasture for certified organic beef (150 acres).

Many farmers who raise certified organic beef don't have enough pasture. The proposed pasture would be close to Davidson and be available to local butcher shops who want to buy a few head and have them in close proximity to Davidson for their convenience to butcher.

6. Establish a community flour mill equipped with a stone mill.

If you mill wheat with a stone mill it operates cool enough so the flour won't go rancid. It is the only milling system that preserves all the nutrition in the cereal grains or legumes it mills. It would be desirable to have a grain cleaner with the flour mill and the most logical place for the flour mill is in town where the certified organic flour would be available to the bakeries or any consumers that bake bread or pastry at home. It would certainly be an attraction to encourage the occupants of the 5,000 automobiles that go by on the highway to stop for a flour supply. Certified organic stone-ground flour is the most nutritious wheat crop product on the market today.

7. Fruit tree growing project.

One of our directors, Charlie Moore, has spent a lot of time in British Columbia orchards. He is firmly of the opinion that we should start an orchard program here and start growing fruit trees native to Saskatchewan and that produce well in our climate.

It is certainly a way of creating jobs here in the community and having a supply of fresh nutritious food.

This kind of program could lead to establishing a jam and jelly cannery in Davidson. It could be the first in the province and would attract a lot of tourists to Davidson to buy and sample our local product.

Well, the question is, are these programs going to be subsidized? The provincial budget was tabled March 31, two days before our meeting. Pipke says that only time will tell about the programs that will be helped or otherwise. In the last depression, many of our co-operatives were organized to provide services we wanted and couldn't afford individually. Although it hasn't been proclaimed a depression, we are in about just as much of an economic struggle as farmers were in, in the Depression of the 1930s. Some people called it the Great Depression. I think the one thing that it was great for was bringing people together to accomplish goals and objectives they couldn't accomplish individually. It will be interesting to see what happens.

Elmer Laird, president  
Back To The Farm  
Research Board

# ORGANIC PRODUCTS

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October 13, 2003 Davidson Leader

## Letter to business association hopes to attract tourists to Davidson

Open letter to:

Daryl Shirkey and Gerrid Gust, Co-chairmen  
Davidson and District Business Association and  
Connie Townsend, chairperson  
Davidson and District Economic Development Board

Re: Business proposal to attract people to Davidson and improve nutrition.

Proposal: to construct a building that would house a grain cleaner, a stone ground flour mill and bakery for the purpose of cleaning, milling, baking and marketing certified organic baking products to supply Saskatchewan or out of province markets.

As a result of my allergies to wheat, I have become aware of the lack of this kind of enterprise in Saskatchewan. Certified organic Kamut, Spelt, Multi-grain, flax, and whole wheat, sixteen grain and sprouted grain bread are sold here, but are milled and baked in British Columbia and shipped to health food stores and organic stores in Saskatchewan.

The Davidson Co-operative Bakery had a reputation for supplying excellent bread at one time. Jack Sellers, who was Davidson's mayor was the Co-op baker.

Frequently, local citizens would see a half-ton truck backed up to the bakery door to pick up orders of bread. The truck might have come from anywhere within a hundred mile radius of Davidson. I think Davidson could do it again.

I have a wrapper here from a loaf of certified organic "Food for Life" Ezekiel 4:9, flourless bread, baked by the Food for Life Baking Company Ltd. at Corona, Calif. and sold by Steep-Hill Co-op in Saskatoon. Contents of the bread are wheat, barley, beans, millet, and spelt. It is a unique product because it contains wheat but not flour. The grains and legumes are all sprouted and then ground and baked into a loaf. Mrs. Marc Loiselle of Vonda has been baking certified organic sprouted wheat bread at home for many years. Sprouted wheat bread is particularly good for someone with a waistline like mine. It decreases the starch and increases the protein.

Stone grinding of wheat goes back to Bible times when flour mills were powered by water wheels. It is the only way flour could be ground slow enough at that time to preserve all the nutrition. Modern stone mills are electrically driven but the wheat is still ground slow enough that the wheat germ (Vitamin E) will not go rancid even on a shelf at room temperature.

The Town of Craik has started on their sustainable living project. They have started building their straw bale and solar heated demonstration building. It is certainly

going to attract a lot of the people in the estimated 5,000 vehicles that travel Highway 11 every day.

Davidson needs a project of environmental significance to attract people to Davidson. Davidson's central location makes it a logical place for a bakery.

I haven't heard that Craik is considering a certified organic stone ground flour bakery, but if they did it would certainly add to the attraction of their sustainable living project.

Perhaps, citizens here are not aware of the increased demand for certified organic food, but it is growing very rapidly in urban populations.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss a proposed flour mill and bakery with your organizations at any time.

Elmer Laird, president  
Back To The Farm  
Research Foundation

February 12, 2001 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:  
Dennis Desautels, Canada's Auditor General:

In your interview on CTV's Canada AM Feb. 7 you expressed concern that Health Canada's health protection branch is not adequately testing beef for *E. coli* and salmonella coming into Canada from the U.S. as thoroughly as beef going the other way. There is much more to be concerned about Canadian beef production than salmonella and *E. coli*. However, you will be pleased to hear that a relatively new organization, the Canadian Organic Livestock Association Inc. (COLA) is holding their annual meeting in Kerrobert, Sask. Feb.24. They have a membership of over 40 certified organic beef producers from the three prairie provinces that have been working to recruit organic producers so they can supply an orderly flow of certified organic beef into the national and international marketplace. Certified organic producers have changed many of the conventional production methods to produce healthier beef.

For example, cattle are grazed only on pastures and fields that are certified organic. This means that no herbicides or commercial fertilizers are used in the fields. The cattle are fed and finished on certified organic hay, cereal grains or legumes (for example barley, oats peas and lentils) and must have a source of water free of pesticides. Pesticides are not permitted for the control of warble fly or lice.

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* describes the warble fly as follows:

The warble fly also called cattle grub, or heel fly, any of several species of insects included either in the bot fly family Oestridae or the family Hypodermatidae (order Diptera). The warble flies *Hypoderma lineatum* and *H. bovis* large, heavy, beelike — deposit their eggs on cattle legs. The larvae penetrate the skin, migrate through the body for several months, and produce a characteristic lump, or warble, on the animal's back. The warble contains a hole, which is used for breathing. When mature, the cattle grub emerges and drops to the ground to pupate and transform into an adult fly. The insect's breathing holes in the cowhide reduce the latter's commercial value. Another warble fly that causes economic losses of leather, meat and milk is a reindeer pest (*Oedemagena tarandi*).

The warble fly is widespread in Europe and North America. Control methods include the oral administration to cattle of an insecticide and manual removal of the larvae from the animal's backs.

In most cases here on the prairies, the pesticide used to kill the larvae or warble fly eggs is brushed on the animal's back from ears to tail and must be strong enough to enter the animal's system and destroy the larvae before it reaches the skin surface.

Organic farmers use diatomaceous earth containing pulverized fish fossils mined from ancient seabeds in New Mexico to control both warble flies and lice. No antibiotics are used in treating ill cattle. If the farmer uses antibiotics for treating the animals, most certification agencies require him or her to sell the animal as conventional beef.

This is the beginning of a big change, as about half of the antibiotics in Canada go into livestock and poultry production. People who have never used antibiotics may find they are allergic to them because of the antibiotic residues they consume in conventional meat and poultry. As quoted from the *New England Journal of Medicine* in Jan. 19, 2001 edition of *The Western Producer*, "Extensive use of antibiotics in both people and animals is blamed for breeding new bugs that withstand antibiotics. The drugs



revolutionized medicine when they were first introduced in the middle of the 20th century and their declining effectiveness is a serious concern to the medical community today.”

Certified organic beef producers do not add “animal protein” (which is derived from dead animals) to livestock rations. Animal protein is highly suspect in the transfer of mad cow disease from animals to humans.

Growth hormones are not permitted in the raising or production of certified organic cattle, hogs or poultry. Growth hormones were introduced into cattle production in about 1955. I remember attending a farmers’ meeting in Davidson where it was being discussed. One farmer asked his neighbour, “Do you notice any difference?” The answer was, “Not much, except the steers (castrated bulls) are riding the other animals.” This means they are sexually excited. The question is: What effects do the hormones have on humans?

In addition, certification organizations demand that all livestock is handled, transported and housed in humane conditions. Slaughterhouses, packaging plants and butcher shops must have their premises certified organic so that the “audit trail” from the producer’s farm to the consumer’s table can be maintained.

The farmers who belong to COLA are proud of the fact they are producing as healthy animals as possible. Doug Taylor, Kenaston, who is a COLA director, says that he is convinced the membership of COLA will rapidly increase. They are doing this without any help or assistance from federal or provincial governments.

Well Mr. Desautels, it is abundantly clear the flaw in federal health and agriculture policies is the fact they don’t promote or encourage the production of healthy animals in a clean environment. If you check your records you will find out the federal government has spent billions of wasted dollars over the years promoting chemical agriculture and more recently they are again wasting billions of dollars on genetically altered or modified crops such as canola and wheat. I sincerely hope that you make the federal government aware that a healthy lifestyle, a clean environment and the healthiest food possible to produce is the foundation of good health. If you don’t, our health-care crisis will collapse our national Medicare program.

The Mulroney government passed the *Plant Breeders Rights Act* in 1991. This act gave transnational corporations the right to patent and control their own seed. As a result Canadians lost political control of agriculture, agronomists lost their intellectual freedom and farmers began losing control of their farms. The issues you raise about the ineffectiveness of the Health Protection Branch and the Department of Agriculture regarding quality control of food cannot be resolved until the Plant Breeders Rights Act is rescinded and Canadians recover political control of agriculture. I hope you pass this message on to your political colleagues who are the policy makers.

Elmer Laird, president,  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

April 14, 1997 Davidson Leader

In the world of “international trade” the Americans are determined to market beef raised with growth hormones into Europe. Europe is just as determined not to buy it. Here in Canada, Dr. Anne A. MacKenzie, Director General, Food Inspection Directorate, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, has developed a program to certify hormone free beef production. The program is called “Canadian Program For Certifying Freedom From Hormonal Growth Promotants (HOPs). Dr Garry Thiesson of the same department is in charge of the program.

The program is designed to meet European standards for hormone- free beef. Two slaughter houses in Alberta are anxious to start marketing hormone-free beef to both Europe and Japan.

Canadians are not aware of the program so the demand from Canadian consumers is unknown. American beef is marketed in Canada through American owned fast food outlets and supermarkets.

Dr. Garry Thiesson said, “The program with Europe is still being negotiated. Dr. Ian Kirk is the negotiator for Canada Agriculture and Agri-Food. Agriculture Canada is prepared to work with certified organic producers to provide ‘hormone-free beef for the Canadian market. They will work with all producers to provide hormone-free beef for the European market. It will be a form of a quality contract.”

Dr. Dennis Will, Regional Program Officer, Agriculture Canada, is the head federal meat inspector for Saskatchewan and Manitoba. He is prepared to attend a beef producers’ meeting at Davidson to discuss the rules and regulations for marketing hormone-free beef. Bill Ratcliffe with Edmonton Meat Packing Ltd., Alsask Beef Division, will also attend a beef producers meeting at Davidson to meet producers to discuss marketing hormone-free beef.

He believes there is a market in both Europe and Japan. He says that volume is important. They would have to have a fair number of producers committed to providing a steady flow of product into overseas markets.

If the program goes ahead, beef producers will have to work with Agriculture Canada to certify the meat is hormone-free. They will have to work with the meat processors and packers on volume and price. Elsewhere on this page is a questionnaire asking beef producers in the area served by The Davidson Leader containing some questions about the volume of production they have and if they are interested in finding out more about marketing and certifying hormone- free beef. If you are interested please in the questionnaire and mail it to Beef Survey, to The Davidson Leader, Box 786, Davidson, Sask., SOG IAO.

June 12, 2006 Davidson Leader

### **Of moose to men: the take over of the family farm**

We are in for a variety of surprises in the organic food industry. There was a recent announcement that Coca Cola, Walmart, and Philip Morris were all going in for organic food in a big way. Wednesday morning, May 7, 2006 CBC Radio reported that Walmart is developing organic food marketing programs in the U.S.A. at the present time and would be concentrating on the Canadian market later this fall. Certified organic farmer Marc Loiselle of Vonda, Sask. was rather skeptical because he wasn't sure Walmart would be marketing Canadian grown organic food or importing it.

The June 2006 Agriview produced by Sask. Agriculture and Food and circulated to all farmers was talking about herbicide resistant weeds. Manitoba agronomists have been talking about herbicide resistant weeds for several years but no one from Saskatchewan has. An article entitled "Crop Protection Laboratory Services Available To The Agri-industry" by Grant Holxgang, supervisor of the Crop Protection Laboratory of Sask. Agriculture and Food said, "Herbicide resistance testing of weed species can be done for any weed species and for any group of herbicides. Samples should be comprised of 1,000 mature, disease free, dry seeds on which no pre harvest weed control product has been used. This work is usually done from January to May, due to dormancy issues, but specimens should be shipped to the CPL in the fall as they become available."

Finally, Sask. Agriculture is recognizing what many farmers have known for a long time - herbicides are obsolete.

"Organic Business News" is published by Hotline Printing and Publishing, P.O. Box 161132 Altamonte Springs, Florida. In an article entitled "Bonus Reports Spark Higher Organic Milk Payments", the story by Dennis Blank editor and publisher, says "Organic dairy issues have been at the top of the radar screen for months now, as seen with the debate over pasture before the National Organic Standards Board. Last month in College Station, PA, experts testified on the value of pasture feeding and addressed a number of health issues. Then, there is the economic side. Producers of organic milk and milk products have not been able to keep up with the recent high demand, triggered two years ago by consumer concerns over mad cow disease. The shortage and demand have pushed up organic milk prices, while conventional dairymen are faced with softening milk prices that have dropped to a low of \$14.25 per hundredweight in the northeast. Compare that to the lowest organic milk prices of \$22.5 per hundredweight. So right now, money talks, and apparently it is doing a lot of talking in the Northeast. As you will see in this issue, there are reports that some farmers have received signing bonuses up to \$7,000. With the entry of a bigger player, HP Hood, LLC, Horizon Organic and Organic Valley are fighting hard to keep the dairies they have as well as aid transitioning farmers coming into the marketplace. "HP Hood came in here with suitcases full of money but so far it hasn't worked," says Mary Hinnencamp, general manager of the Pride of Main Street, a Minnesota buyer's co-operative. "I am sure \$10,000 offers are being made for good quality farmers," said Peter Miller, who signs up new farmers for OV. "I know what is happening is very dirty and what is happening is less on the ethical side," says a producer who did not want to be named. The fierce competition is raising questions about whether the new dairy operators are meeting strict organic standards...

While there was widespread agreement over 120-day, 30 per cent dry matter pasture regulations approved by the National Organic Standards Board at the Dairy Symposium, there were concerns on whether it could be enforced. "Is it enforceable?" asked Kathy Solder, a research animal scientist for USDA. "It is going to be a real challenge to make national standards. We cannot truly measure the amount of dry matter. It is still only estimated and could be very subjective and variable." Certifiers also said enforcement was possible but would not be easy. "If optimizing pasture is what people want, then we will go out and enforce it," said Brian McElroy, certification director for California Certified Organic Farmers. "The organic systems plan is not the way to enforce. It is going to be hard if you want me to issue a notice of proposed suspension on 25 per cent dry matter, or 119 days. You need to go to court for a day."

California dairyman Albert Straus, one of the West coast pioneers of organic production, said it would be difficult to comply with pasture requirements because the amount of rain his farm gets. "It would be very difficult to verify the amount of pasture," he said, "and our cows do not have access after heavy rains." But Kathie Arnold, the wife of a New York dairy operator, defended the rule. "It may not be perfect, but our cows are on pasture 340 days a year." She criticized all the hoopla about animal welfare. "If you graze your cows, they won't be sick," she said.

Katherine DiMatteo was honoured for her leadership as the outgoing executive director of the Organic Trade Assn. during the organization's convention this month in Chicago. Joe Smillie, one of the founders of the OTA, cited the difficulties of the job during his tribute to her. "It takes a lot of energy to keep everyone happy," he said. "It also means accepting criticism, even from uninformed and misinformed members, media and government." The association came in for a lot of criticism during the battle to get legislation passed through Congress that restored synthetic ingredients after the Harvey v. Johanns decision last year. The OTA was concerned about the impact on its members who had hundreds of products in the marketplace with synthetic ingredients. DiMatteo came under fire for not including other groups in the final decision that led to the passage of the controversial rider. The organization has lost members because of the controversy and relations are still testy with other groups. Even so, DiMatteo did a good job overall building the trade organization, especially in marketing the organic name. Her presence will be missed.

I included the above article to show everyone interested in food the struggle that is going on south of the border.

There is no certified organic milk produced and sold in Saskatchewan. I went shopping at Natures Best organic store on 14th Avenue in Regina a couple of weeks ago. I bought a litre of homogenized certified organic milk that was imported from British Columbia for \$3.99. The price certainly reflects the demand for organic milk. In the lower B.C. mainland and Vancouver Island friends tell me they can buy all the organic food they want in a wide variety of stores in Victoria and Vancouver.

Certified organic food is presently and has been served for the last four years in the House of Commons. The head chef of the House of Commons tells me that if a banquet is held for a foreign dignitary in Ottawa the food is all certified organic and he buys from all provinces. Saskatchewan has not moved into serving organic food yet in hospitals, nursing homes, food banks, school lunch programs or to pregnant women or new mothers. It isn't politically popular here, apparently. It will be interesting to find out

what the new Secretary MLA Lon Borgerson will do as Legislative Secretary for organic farming and marketing.

McDonalds, the world wide king of hamburgers, says that after this year 2006 it will not accept any meat containing antibiotics or growth hormones. McDonalds, worldwide, buys 1.4 billion pounds of meat a year. This will probably make our hog factories obsolete.

On May 7, long time environmentalist Allan Appleby told the press that it was time Saskatchewan citizens had some input into deciding whether we will rely on the family farm or the transnational corporations to supply food in the future.

In the January 23, 2006 federal election none of the mainline parties said that they supported the family farm as the basic unit of food. It appears that all mainline politicians are waiting for the transnational drug and chemical companies to take over the family farm. They think, apparently, that administration would be easier.

The final major news event is the Canadian Wheat Board is going to direct market certified organic grain. Certified organic farmers have had to sell all board grains (spring wheat, durum and barley) to the board, buy them back and then sell their own grain.

Short story: Our Washington Street butcher John Sperling lives in Craik. He told me a couple of weeks ago that when he got up one morning there was a large moose in his Craik garden. He said the following day he saw another one along the road on his way to Davidson. John tells me that he thinks that when the early homesteaders moved in and settled the prairie the moose thought it was too crowded so they moved out.

Now as the number of farmers living on farms is thinning out John believes the moose are moving back to occupy the empty farm yards. The big question is - what are the top executives of the transnational drug and chemical companies going to do when they start to move in and find out the moose have already taken over the farms???

October 31, 1994 Davidson Leader

Growing Hemp legally for pulp and fibre may become a lucrative “cash” crop on the Canadian prairie in the not too distant future. On Tuesday October 18th about forty-five farmers, business people, Agriculture Canada and University Researchers, Crop Scientist Marketing experts and Economic Development people attended a five hour Hemp growing seminar at the Travelodge Hotel in Regina. People attending the meeting sponsored by Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food were from Manitoba, North Dakota, Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Hemp was grown legally in five provinces in Canada until 1938. It was just on the verge of becoming a profitable crop when the United States criminalized its production. Apparently Hurst Newspapers of California and Du Ponte had large oil interest and wanted to develop the plastics industry and Hemp was a competitor. Informed sources say the Hemp fibre and pulp can be used for making any product that can be made out of plastic. History reports the growing of Hemp as early as 8500 BC in China. It is reported that the Chinese made paper from Hemp as early as 150 BC. It has been grown on all the continents of the World. Hemp was grown as early as 1495 AD in North America. Hemp provided the fibre to make the sails for sailing ships, over the years we have hemp rope, sacks etc. The seed has been crushed for cooking oil and used for medicinal purposes.

The sudden interest in reviving the Hemp industry is sparked by the realization of environmentalist that at the rate we are using paper in the industrialized world it won't be long before all the forests are destroyed. Trees are our major supplier of oxygen. An article in the February/March edition of the publication “Earthkeeper” (An Environmental magazine) by Scott Black and Ann Guthrie describes Hemp growing activities in Europe.

“The Hemp story might have ended in 1938, were it not for a new strain of the plant engineered in France. The plant contained such low levels of THC (narcotic level) that its potential for recreational use was nullified, Hemp was back in business.

In 1993 doors were opening through our European Community. England just sold its first crop, the French seed is also being sold in Belgium and Spain.

A government statement released to the British Press typifies the total acceptance of drug free Hemp. In February 1993 the British Government announced the legalization of Hemp production to “allow the UK farmers to gain a share of the market currently occupied by our EO partners” could North America be far behind?”

Dr. Ross Hosie, Chief of International Control and Licensing Division, Bureau of Dangerous Drugs, Health and Welfare Canada, Ottawa addressed the meeting. He said he couldn't predict exactly when Hemp would be available to plant because a lot of work had to be done and he wasn't going to try to outguess the Politicians. He said the legalization of the growing of Hemp (with low THC levels) for commercial purposes is being studied by a committee of the House of Commons at this time. He said that it might pass third reading in this session of parliament. Then it would have to go to the Senate. Following passage by the Senate, the Federal Minister of Health and Welfare would have to draft regulations. Agriculture Canada and the Department of Justice would be involved in drafting the regulations. “Justice” would be involved because the R.C.M.P. would be concerned whether or not the Hemp being grown had low THC levels. Agriculture Canada would be involved to do the necessary research in the same way that any other

new crop is introduced in Canada. Fifteen researchers present at the meeting said that research reports on growing Hemp prior to 1938 would not be valid because there is no seed or records of the type or source of seed.

Prairie farmers will be interested for several reasons, it is reported that Hemp will grow on poor quality soils, it has been grown for the purpose of controlling weeds it will not require herbicides and it will provide a cash crop. Will farmers be interested in fitting Hemp into their present rotation?

February 6, 1995 Davidson Leader

Saskhemp held their first annual meeting at the Community Centre in Watrous on Sunday, January 29, 1995. Forty-five farmers and researchers from all over Saskatchewan attended the meeting. They decided to form a non profit corporation for promoting the legal production, processing and marketing of hemp. An election of officers was held, the President is Mark Chenier, North Portal; Vice President, Alec Wilson, Regina; Marie and Grant Krieger, Regina were elected Secretary and Treasurer. Board members elected are Arlette Alcock, Watrous; Shawn Cornish, Turtleford; Carol Sanders, Prince Albert; Frank Hulsebosch, Tisdale; Michael Munro, Regina; Niel Strayer, Belle Plaine, Bill Newton, Aberdeen and Robert Poncelet, Viscount. In addition they elected an advisory committee of Dr. Al Slinkard, Crop Science, University of Saskatchewan, Dr. Paul Kolodziejczyk of the POS (Protein, Oil and Starch) plant, Saskatoon and Dr. Lawrence Townley-Smith of Melfort, Agrologist at Agriculture Canada Research Station.

Currently there is a Bill before the House of Commons that when passed, will permit the legal growing of Hemp in Canada.

As soon as hemp growing is legalized by the Canadian Government, Agriculture Canada will start bringing in seed from other parts of the world for testing to find out the most suitable varieties for this climate, which ones can be processed more easily and which ones can be reproduced in our short frost free climate. Evaluating the oil and food potential of the seed is also important. Hemp has many uses, paper from hemp pulp is one of them. Journalist Tom Clark, the anchor man on the program "This Week In Business" on January 29, 1995, said "There is a severe international shortage of paper, the demand is increasing 4% per year, in fact some large newspapers might have to go out of business due to shortages of newsprint. Paper cost are going up locally too. There will definitely be a market for hemp pulp once it becomes available. Environmentalists who are concerned about the destruction of both the Amazon Rain Forest and Canadian forests are pleased that hemp is an invisible alternative to wood.

They are concerned about the loss of forest because of their oxygen producing functions that contribute so much to our health and wellbeing.

Hemp is also used for fibre, people who suffer from ecological illness who need natural fibre, for clothing, bedding, rugs and upholstery are delighted there will be an alternative to many of the petroleum based products they are allergic too. It is difficult to get organic cotton fibre now because producers are heavy users of pesticides.

The December 16, 1994 BiWeekly Bulletin published by Agriculture Canada says "Hemp grows best on rich and fertile, neutral or slightly alkaline, well drained clay loam or silt loam soils in which the subsoil is fairly retentive of moisture." It goes on to say "Although hemp makes heavy nutrient demands on the soil, research conducted at Canadian experimental farms during the 1930's showed that Hemp takes less from the soil than wheat or corn when taking into account that 70% of the nutrients absorbed by the plants are returned to the soil."

Hemp does not require any herbicides it will well when into an organic farmers rotation because it is very competitive and will choke out all the weeds. It will also reduce a chemical farmers pesticide bills substantially. Reports indicate it will grow 8- 10 feet high, (depending on available moisture) and the roots go as far down as the plant is



tall. It will replace much needed soil fibre and if it grows on even slightly alkaline soils it would be a real asset in solving many of Saskatchewan soil problems.

The Bi-weekly Bulletin discusses uses for hemp seed. It states, "The Hemp seed is light brown to dark grey in color containing between 25-35% oil and 25% protein. Hemp seed contains eight essential proteins and three essential fatty acids. It can be ground up and used in soups, cereals, cakes and other foods. Raw hemp seed has commonly been used for domesticated animals. The oil passed from hemp seed contains fifty-five percent (flax contains fifty-eight percent) linoleic acid and twenty-five percent linolenic acid. Hemp oil is among the lowest is saturated fats at eight percent of total oil volume, canola contains six percent." There is also a potential for use for a combination of hemp-flax fibre.

World production of hemp peaked more seeps in the U.S. for narcotic reasons. In 1992 world production of hemp fibre was 124,000 tonnes with China, Russia, Korea and Romania as major producers. China started growing hemp about 8,000 B.C., so it has been used for many years for many purposes.

Bill C-7, the controlled Drug and Substances Act, was introduced on February 2, 1994 by Federal Ministers of Health and Justice (for amendment) to bring Canadian law in line with international accords to which this country is a party. The amendments will legalize the growing of new strains of hemp developed in France that have THC (low narcotic) levels.

Hemp production looks very promising and has pressure from outside Canada supporting it, Federal and Provincial Government support and a strong provincial organization working for its development. The question is - will some of the profits stay in the farmers pockets when hemp is in production?

September 28, 1998 Davidson Leader

Seventy-two-year old, five foot ten inch Mike Kasper and his wife, Vi, are dwarfed by the tall hemp growing on their farm near Colonsay. This is the first time hemp has been legally grown in Saskatchewan in seventy years. He was swathing his twenty-eight acre hemp crop on Wednesday afternoon, September 16, 1998. Kasper is one of about twenty-five farmers in Saskatchewan who are growing ten to thirty acres of hemp this year. Dave Hutcheson, President of Western Growers Seed Corporation, Saskatoon, says theirs is about three hundred and fifty acres seeded in Saskatchewan this year, 85 percent of the producers are certified organic farmers. The variety is Zoltonosha imported from the Ukraine because of its low THC (narcotic content). Permits were issued to producers by the Narcotics Division of the Health Protection Branch, Ottawa, and growers are issued an Industrial Hemp Licence by the Bureau of Drug Surveillance, Department of Health, in Ottawa. Applicants had to have a letter from the RCMP stating they didn't have a criminal record. They also had to have the GPS (Ground Positioning System) location of the field where they were seeding the hemp registered with Ottawa. Contract prices for certified organic hemp are 70 per pound and commercial are 50 per pound.

Kasper is growing hemp on the quarter section of land his father gave him in 1948. He started farming with his father at the age of fourteen in 1940. He married his wife, Violet Fiset from Val Marie, SK, in 1955. They met at the U of S where Mike was attending the School of Agriculture and Vi was taking nursing. Over the years the farm increased to six quarters and they raised five children. They have been farming organically for thirty years. Kasper says his father grew hemp in the Ukraine before he came to Canada in 1912.

Hemp was grown in five provinces in Canada legally until 1928. In 1928 Hurst Newspaper of California, who had a large timber interest, and Dupont, who had a large oil interest, became aware that hemp pulp and fibre were their competitors in the paper and plastics industry. They persuaded the American government to ban the growing of hemp for narcotic reasons. The Canadian government quickly followed and hemp growing was banned in both the United States and Canada for many years. During the war the American War Industries lost their supply of hemp for canvas and the growing of hemp in the States was legalized for three years and then the ban was put in place again after World War H.

Hemp seed this spring cost \$4.00 per pound and the recommended seeding rate was 12 to 15 pounds per acre. Kasper pre-worked his field three times before he seeded hemp at the end of May. He harrowed afterwards. They had about four and one-half inches of rain during the growing season. He seeded the hemp with a Seed-Rite drill. In addition to the hemp, Kasper grew certified organic winter wheat, rye, barley, flax and alfalfa this year, 540 acres of crop and 220 acres of summerfallow. Kasper hopes the hemp production for pulp and fibre will increase to where it will save our trees. He believes that we will need trees to produce oxygen to sustain life on this planet in the future. Presently Hutcheson says hemp seed will be used as a whole seed, a de-hulled seed, oil, meal and for cosmetics. Hemp oil is recognized by the Health Food Industry as high in nutrition, containing more omega three nutrients than flax seed oil.

It appears that farmers in Saskatchewan will be producing both an oil seed variety of hemp and one for fibre and pulp in the future. Neil Strayer, certified organic producer

from Drinkwater and also a longtime exporter of certified organic products, is growing a variety called Fin-314. His crop is designated for seed production. It is shorter than Zoltonosha, it is supposed to be high yielding and has a shorter growing season, it takes seventy-five days to mature. He didn't get his seed until July 1, 1998, and it is ready to harvest now. Strayer is working with two Finnish researchers and Jerzy Przytyk, a farmer from Quebec. They have a company called JENX Agriculture Research.

Arron Webster of Imperial, SK, a commercial (or chemical) farmer has ten acres along Highway 44 about twelve to fourteen miles west of Davidson. He is getting ready to harvest and doesn't know whether to swath or straight combine.

All hemp producers are speculating on the following questions:

When should I swath the hemp? If I swath too early the seed might not mature. If I wait too long will it shell out? If I don't swath, will it freeze? If I leave it stand for straight combining will the birds eat it? (Apparently the birds like hemp seed and it is used in birdseed.) If I swath it will it sprout in the swath if we have a long wet spell?

There are also a lot of telephone calls back and forth discussing the following questions. How high did you cut it? What kind of a swather did you use? How did you get the tall stuff through the swather and what kind of a pickup do you need to pick it up? Also, what am I going to do with the hemp straw? Hutcheson says he will be inviting all producers to a meeting in December to discuss their experiences growing and harvesting hemp.

February 28, 1994 Davidson Leader

Federal and Provincial politicians and the National media have generated far more heat than light in the last month regarding the "tobacco smuggling" issue with its tax and health implications. Indeed, we have not seen the end, there will be more. It is obvious all groups involved in the national debate are completely out of touch with environmental and health issues about the hazards of smoking.

To date they have not identified the parties responsible for the health hazards smokers are exposed to. They are the transnational chemical companies who produce DDT and other pesticides and the Federal Department of Agriculture who permitted DDT to be used for tobacco production until 1984.

DDT is one of the most persistent and toxic chemicals in the environment and causes cancer and more particularly breast cancer. It was banned for all agricultural use in Canada in about 1960-61 except tobacco. The pesticides Aldrin and Dieldrin contained DDT and were used mainly for grasshopper control on the prairie before DDT was banned. Federal environment people report that DDT residues are rarely found any more in prairie surface waters. Apparently it has finally worked its way out of the ecological cycle after thirty years.

Dioxin is one of the most toxic chemicals known to man, until very recently it was in all paper products. If you wanted to administer DDT and Dioxin to someone there is no better way than by burning tobacco wrapped in a paper in a slow fire under their nose where they can inhale all the fumes.

The C.B.C. program "Market Place" on February 22, 1994, reported they were still finding DDT in cow's milk in the U.S.A., where its use had been banned for twenty years.

I asked a cancer researcher if it was the DDT or the tobacco that was causing cancer. He said they didn't bother to try to find out it was all the same product. It is obvious cancer researchers and the cancer society would rather challenge the tobacco lobby than the all powerful chemical lobby.

The questions are - What to do about the health and tax issues related to smoking?  
1) if you don't smoke, don't start. 2) If you are pregnant, don't smoke under any conditions, don't even inhale second hand tobacco smoke or it may cause injury to your unborn child. 3) If you are worried about the long term health effects or high tobacco taxes or both, quit. 4) If you are addicted (it is recognized tobacco addiction is harder to overcome than most others) and can't quit, grow your own - tobacco grows well in Saskatchewan. I have grown certified organic tobacco in our garden the last two years. All you need is some chemically free soil, a \$2.50 cent package of tobacco seeds and you will have no more tax problems and fewer health problems. 5) Smoke a pipe, that will eliminate any worry about toxins in the paper, my great grandmother did but they didn't have DDT or any other pesticides then.

March 16, 1998 Davidson Leader

(Continued from Mar.9, 1998)

Open letter to:  
Senator Cohn Kenny, (Liberal)  
The Senate of Canada  
Government Building  
Ottawa. ON, K1A 0A4

Dear Senator Kenny,

Re: Your letter to the Editor, "The Davidson Leader", March 2, 1998 about the health hazards of smoking tobacco.

I agree with you completely about the health hazards of tobacco but I don't agree with the solution you are proposing in your private members' "Bill" that would add fifty cents a carton to the price of cigarettes to carry out educational programs. It is obvious you don't understand what is happening in tobacco farming, genetic engineering, tobacco processing and nicotine addiction.

Journalist, Penni Mitchell, in the February 17, 1998 edition of the Winnipeg Free Press said, "A Biotechnology company admitted last month in a California courtroom to conspiring with tobacco companies to grow genetically-altered tobacco plants with higher nicotine levels ensuring that consumers would be heavily hooked on tobacco products". Tobacco companies have been adding extra nicotine to tobacco for quite some time. The result has been that once anyone is hooked on tobacco (nicotine) it is practically impossible to quit smoking.

During the recent Olympics, we heard press reports about Canadian gold medal snowboard winner, Ross Rebagliati, testing positive for marijuana because he attended a farewell party at Whistler, BC, where marijuana was smoked. If that much exposure is all it takes to test positive for marijuana, what about children that are raised in a home where they are exposed to second hand tobacco smoke from nicotine enhanced tobacco. It is obvious they will become addicted while they are still infants and when they are old enough to have their first "puff" they will be completely hooked.

The agriculture pesticide, D.D.T., has long been recognized as a carcinogen. It was banned as a pesticide in 1960-61 for all agricultural use except for pest control on tobacco plants. DD.T. was not banned for use in tobacco production until 1984. Scientists report that D.D.T. has a half-life of twenty-eight to thirty years, so it is very likely that the soils where tobacco is being grown today are still polluted with D.D.T. It is abundantly clear that the many pesticide residues and processing chemicals in tobacco and cigarette paper are far more hazardous to human health than the tobacco is.

I have been an organic farmer for thirty years. Early's Farm and Garden Centre Inc., Saskatoon, sells tobacco seeds. One hundred tobacco seeds cost \$2.59. I have grown "certified organic" tobacco in my garden for several years recently. Tobacco in this climate has to be started indoors as "bedding plants" and then transplanted in the garden

when the weather warms up. One year I grew fifty plants and I am perfectly sure I produced far more tobacco than any family would use in a year.

Economically there are huge savings for anyone growing their own tobacco. All you have invested is a couple of dollars worth of seed and some elbow grease. However, a package of cigarettes at the Davidson Coop grocery store cost \$6.05. If you are a “pack a day” smoker the yearly bill would be \$2208.25.

It is almost impossible to measure in economic terms health benefits to yourself, your family and friends if you started smoking (grow your own) “certified organic” tobacco. You would avoid breathing in all the toxic chemicals that are in today’s ‘over the counter’ cigarettes particularly if you smoked a pipe. You would also reduce the nicotine intake and after a few months it might be easier to quit smoking altogether. I smoked for many years and I know from experience how difficult it was to quit thirty years ago when nicotine levels were lower.

Recommendation: We recommend that with the help and support of your Senate colleagues you introduce a bill in the house of commons that restricts the sale of all tobacco in Canada to “certified organic” tobacco only and that provides a two year “phase in” period in the bill.

Enclosure one (in original letter) is a small package of “certified organic” tobacco grown in my garden two years ago. You use it for research purposes.

Enclosure two (in original letter) is a package of tobacco seeds from Early’s Farm and Garden Centre Inc.

In 1988-89, House of Commons Speaker, John Fraser started an organic garden on Parliament Hill. He was an environmentalist and also instructed the staff to stop using toxic herbicides and pesticides on the lawns and gardens on Parliament. Kitchen waste was composted and used for fertilizer. I am sure the organic garden is still there and perhaps the present speaker, Gilbert Parent, will let you carry out an experiment growing “certified organic” tobacco on Parliament Hill. The soil will be free of toxic chemical residues by now and perhaps you could persuade the Manager of the Parliament House Green House to start the “bedding plants”.

I am sure that M.P.s. Senators, Parliament Hill staff and tourists would be impressed if they could see how Canada is working to clean up its environment and produce high quality tobacco products. The next step of course would be to start serving “certified organic” food in the restaurants of the House of Commons to demonstrate to all Canadians the health benefits of eating organic food.

Sincerely,  
Elmer Laird, President  
Back to the Farm Research Foundation

June 12, 2000 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:  
Mr. M. Kowalski, MLA Chairman  
Special Committee on Tobacco Control  
Saskatchewan Legislature

Re: The first report of your committee on tobacco control.

Dear Mr. Kowalski:

I am enclosing a package of certified organic (unprocessed) tobacco that was grown in our farm garden in 1998. I bought the seed at Early's Feed and Seed in Saskatoon for \$2.49.

The bedding plants were grown from that seed at Munn's Greenhouse, Craik. There was a total of 300 bedding plants grown from one package of tobacco \$2.49 seed. I grew 60 tobacco plants in my garden and gave the rest to the neighbours. There was nothing in your report about the hazards of chemically grown tobacco. In fact the exposure to residues of toxic pesticides in the tobacco is far more hazardous to young people than adults.

Your first recommendation if you are interested in the health of our citizens would have been:

**Recommendation #1:**

1) Only certified organic tobacco will be marketed in Saskatchewan. Tobacco is a farm grown product, in the early days of chemical use we had two pesticides Aldrin and Deidrin, both were D.D.T. The pesticides were used for grasshopper control and were very effective. However, they were so toxic they were banned about 1960-1961 for all food production in Canada except growing tobacco. D.D.T. was finally banned for tobacco growing in Canada in 1984. I understand it is still being produced and marketed in third world nations) If memory serves me correctly D.D.T. has a half-life of 28 years. This means that there is still an ample amount of D.D.T. residues in the soil in tobacco growing areas in Canada. In addition pesticides and herbicides are still used in tobacco production.

I have had contacts with the organic farm movement for many years but have never heard about certified, organic tobacco in the commercial market. In addition to the D.D.T., pesticides and herbicides in the tobacco I hear and read reports of large volumes of chemicals being used in the production of cigarette paper.

If you called in a group of scientists and asked them the most effective way to get the toxic chemicals in a cigarette including nicotine into the human body they would unanimously agree it would be by having a slow burning fire under the nose. The heat would blend all the toxic chemicals and probably create some new ones that would rapidly be in-haled.

Your report indicates you are going to legislate programs to keep people from smoking and particularly students in the schools of our province.

However, no where do you explain the hazards of tobacco. Schools are there to provide an education and it is very important to teach students of all ages the dangers or hazards of the environment they live in.

**Recommendation #2: Students should be taught the LD 50 value of toxic pesticides**

Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food and Saskatchewan Labour publish a small 64 page *Pesticide Safety Handbook*. It is available in all Rural Service Centre's in the province and should be in every home and school. On page 12 of the handbook it describes the Lethal dose 50 per cent (LD50) rating that is the standard rating for the toxicity of pesticides as follows: The accepted method of recording the relative toxicity of a pesticide is the Lethal Dose 50 per cent value. This is the estimated dose of the chemical which, when administered, will kill 50 per cent of the test animals under stated conditions. This is one of the accepted parameters used to denote hazard, 'but care must be exercised in its interpretation.

This means that if the pesticide kills 51 per cent 'of the test population under certain circumstances it is unacceptable. However, if it only kills 49 per cent of the test population it is acceptable to the marketplace. Personally if I were going to use a pesticide I would want one that had an LD-O rating with a few extra units in case of error.

The report goes on to state "The figures which designate the LD50 values are expressed in milligrams of the chemical (usually technical material or active' ingredient) per kilogram of body weight of the test animal.

The chemical dose to kill a 2000 pound horse will be about 10 times the dose for a 200 pound foal (The LD50s will be approximately the same for the foal and the horse). For any group of test animals of the same species, therefore, the weight of each animal has to be determined.

The LD50 values are seriously affected by the age of the test animals and strains of the same species may react very differently to the same treatment. For this reason, the LD50 values developed for one species only begin to inspire confidence after numerous tests have been conducted by many workers under varying conditions. It is because pesticides are selective in their action, and therefore different species of animal life react differently to such a degree, that the compounds are useful. Thus, the LD50 values for rats or dogs may have little bearing on the value for birds or humans. Nevertheless, LD50 values are very useful in classifying pesticide chemicals according to their toxicity, as long as it is recognized that the values are not absolute.

Toxicity also varies with the route of absorption into the body. LD50 values are therefore determined for different routes of administration; the oral, dermal and respiratory routes being of most practical significance.

The report list the LD50 values of 189 herbicides, 125 pesticides, 102 fungicides, 21 rodenticides and 21 miscellaneous compounds. This is just toxicity rating. In addition pesticides may cause cancer, birth defects, nervous disorders, etc.

In the world I grew up- in the 1930s my parents, my teachers, friends and neighbours explained the hazards of life at that time. I think todays students deserve the same consideration as a part of their formal education.



I know it is very difficult for you to explore the hazards of pesticides with students when both federal and provincial governments have a policy to promote chemical farming only. In fact many farmers believe that your government is more interested in the survival of agricultural chemical companies than they are the family farm.

Your government spends less than one half of one percent of their annual agriculture budget on organic agriculture.

I hope you will give us an opportunity to discuss this letter with your committee at your next public hearing.

Elmer Laird, president  
Back To The Farm  
Research Foundation

April 8, 2002 Davidson Leader

### **To quit or smoke and go broke that is the question**

Open letter to:

Premier Lorne Calvert, and Social Services Minister Glen Hagel:

We are extremely disappointed to hear about the excessive amount the NDP government raised the so called SIN tax on alcohol and tobacco but particularly on tobacco.

In this instance tobacco addicts are being heavily taxed so the wealthy can have their taxes reduced. This is going to create terrific financial problems for the many people who are on welfare and those who have low incomes.

The fact is gentlemen, some people cannot overcome their addiction to nicotine. My father was one of them. He died of lung cancer when he was 76 years old in 1968 after an eight-year bout with cancer. He smoked until the last time he went to the hospital six weeks before his death.

At the present time a package of 25 cigarettes costs \$10.26 at the Davidson Coop and \$10.50 at the Davidson Hotel Bar. If a person smokes a package a day, the yearly cost would be \$3,744.90.

I checked with my income tax consultant and he reported that an individual would pay that amount of income tax if he/she had an income of \$17,000 or a family of four with an income of \$26,000. This is a very extreme level of taxation for low income people or welfare recipients. The poverty line for an individual in a rural area is \$12,696, community under 30,000 is \$14,561 and under 100,000 is \$15,649. For a family of four in a rural area the poverty line is \$23,892, under 30,000 it's \$27,401 and up to 100,00 it's \$29,448. I am writing this open letter for two reasons.

1. The alternative to paying the high tax is to grow your own certified organic tobacco which is perfectly legal. Early's Farm and Garden Centre Inc., in Saskatoon sells tobacco seed for \$2.59 per package. It guarantees you 100 seeds. The seeds are very small and on one occasion I sent the package to our local green house and they grew 300 bedding plants. I grew 60 of the bedding plants and I know that no one would ever smoke all the tobacco in the 60 plants in one year. However, they must be started indoors before being transplanted in the garden. If you can't kick the tobacco habit, this will save you in excess of \$3,700.

2. Providing a healthier lifestyle. You would have your own supply of organic tobacco. Unfortunately the Health Protection Branch refuses to tell you about the large numbers of toxic, many of them cancer causing, pesticides and herbicides that are used in tobacco production. They don't tell you about the large number of chemicals used in the cigarette paper either.

For example, D.D.T. is one of the most toxic pesticides ever produced. We used it here in Saskatchewan for grasshopper control from 1949 to 1961. In 1961 because of its toxicity it was banned for all agriculture purposes in Canada except tobacco growing. Finally in 1984 it was banned for tobacco growing. It has a half life of 28 years. 1984 was 16 years ago. I will leave it up to you to figure out how much toxic D.D.T. is left in the

tobacco fields today. I am not promoting smoking, however, if you are “hooked” on tobacco, certified organic is a much safer alternative.

Well, gentlemen, Saskatchewan Agriculture has Agriculture Extension Offices all over the province.

I hope your government will seriously consider supplying all low-income citizens with free packages of tobacco seed and the information required to help these citizens grow their own tobacco. I am not promoting smoking, however, it is a well known fact that some people who suffer from addictions will turn to crime to meet their requirements.

This recommendation will supply tobacco addicts with a safe product and might prevent crime.

Elmer Laird, president, Back to The Farm  
Research Foundation

May 29, 2000 Davidson Leader

Open letter to Pat Atkinson, Minister of Health, and  
Louise Simmard, chief executive officer,  
Saskatchewan Health District Boards

Dear Ms. Atkinson and Ms. Simmard;

RE: Canadian Firm marketing clothing made from certified organic cotton fibre.

People who are suffering from chemical allergies and have skin problems will very likely find relief from a new certified organic product. Cloud Mountain Incorporated, 342 Indian Road Crescent Toronto, M6D 2H1 are marketing seven underwear items made from certified organic cotton grown in Texas and Missouri. They started marketing their products in December 1999. The only outlet that I am aware of at this time in Saskatchewan is Steep Hill Co-op on Broadway Avenue in Saskatoon. Steep Hill markets mostly certified organic food. Other outlets in Western Canada are health food stores. Cloud Mountain Inc. put out a "fact sheet" on their underwear. Heather Morrisey, vice-president of the company, outlined why conventional cotton underwear is bad for you. She said:

- Conventional cotton underwear is processed with chlorine bleach. Hydrogen peroxide and formaldehyde is also applied in the processing of the fabrics.
- Dioxin is carcinogen that is derived from chlorine bleach and is responsible for hormone disruption.
- The dye process also has heavy metals that are harmful carcinogens.
- Conventional cotton production accounts for more than 10 per cent of pesticide used and nearly 23 per cent of agricultural insecticide sales.
- It takes one-fourth of a pound of chemicals to produce one cotton T-shirt, and one-fourth of a pound of chemicals to produce two pairs of men's boxer shorts.
- Cotton pesticides can enter the human food chain via cotton seed oil used in processed foods. The meat and dairy products from cows fed cottonseed meal, trash from cotton gins and cotton straw may also contain pesticides that were applied to cotton.
- Contamination of ground water is directly linked to pesticide and fertilizer use on cotton crops. Nitrates found in these fertilizers are found to cause "blue baby syndrome" in infants.
- Use of chemicals in processing makes the fibres weaker and therefore wear out faster.

Commenting on the benefits of underwear made from certified organic cotton Morrisey said:

- Organic cotton does not use any synthetic fertilizers or pesticides.
- Growing the crop organically does not damage the soil, environment or human health.
- Organic cotton farming does not poison farm workers or their families.
- Clean Undies uses no dyes. It is produced only in natural colour.
- Organic certification organizations will not allow genetically modified (GMO) fibre to be labeled organic, therefore Clean Undies are GMO free.
- Purchasing two men's boxers of Clean Undies will eliminate one fourth of a pound of chemicals that would be used to produce the same underwear using conventional cotton.
- Buying organic Clean Undies will aid in the reduction of "blue baby syndrome" among infants.
- Organic cotton is stronger because there is no damage to the fibre from chemical processing.

- Clean Undies will give you many days of quality, organic, comfort.

John Cloud is president of Cloud Holdings, a company that brings together Cloud Mountain Inc., Organic Kitchen and Bastex Fibre. He has been a long-time organic farmer in the U.S. and later in Ontario. Cloud said, “Bastex Inc. was founded in 1998 by Cloud Mountain and Heather Morrisey. Cloud Mountain’s ability to grow fibre crops such as hemp and flax was united with Morrisey’s five years development experience in hemp fibre processing and 17 years of textile related experience in fabric and product development. Bastex’ mission is to develop socks, sweaters and underwear from organic hemp, cotton and other recycled products. Gerry Yakimoski, manager of Steep Hill Co-op, said, “The feel of the fibre against the skin is very soft and pleasant.”

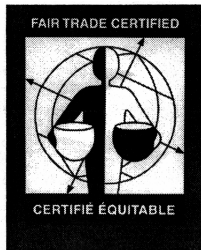
I think Ms. Atkinson and Ms. Simmard, that you should start studying in a practical way the medical savings that will be achieved from using environmentally friendly clothing in Saskatchewan. I have known people who suffer from ecological or environmental illness who had to remove all the carpets and foam rubber furniture from their homes as a result of their illness.

In addition to the savings in health-care costs, environmentally friendly homes and clothes will make life much more comfortable for mans people. It is time as a government you start to recognize and take action on these problems.

It might even be an opportunity to develop some environmental industry in Saskatchewan.

Elmer Laird, president.  
Back to the Farm Research Foundation

December 9, 2002 Davidson Leader

**TransFair working to improve marketing and opportunities for farmers**

Unfortunately if you are shopping for food in Saskatchewan you will not see the above logo yet. However, it is to be hoped that it will not be long. The logo belongs to TransFair Canada, 323 Chapel Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K1N 7Z2. TransFair Canada was organized by Bob Thompson of Ottawa, working with 17 nations in Europe operating under the banner of "The Fair Trade Labelling Organization". Its purpose is to help improve growing marketing and income opportunities for small farmers in 41 nations.

Heather Weinrich, who looks after Marketing and Public Education for the organization says that representatives of Fair Trade Labelling work in developing nations organizing small farmers into cooperatives. They help them upgrade their production methods, and in some instances, Co-op members move to organic production. Here in Canada and Europe they work with marketing outlets to get a fair price for their products. They help them with the marketing of coffee, sugar, rice, cocoa, honey, tea, fruit juice, and fresh fruits all over the world. At the present time they are working with 1,500 retail outlets in Canada. Space doesn't permit the listing of all the products but there are ten coffee, seven sugar, fourteen cocoa, five honey, four tea, three fruit juices, and five fresh fruit lists of products for sale around the world. However, in Canada there is coffee, sugar, rice and tea at present. They get most of the coffee roasted after it comes to Canada. Where the coffee is certified organic they get Organic Crop Improvement Association (OCIA) certification inspectors to inspect the premises where the coffee is roasted. They are able to provide an "audit trail." In the field of certified organic marketing audit trail means that the food product can be traced from the store back to the farm where it was grown or produced. An audit trail is provided for all TransFair products whether organic or conventional. Caroline Whitby, director of TransFair said the following list includes most of the countries Fair Trade Labelling is working in: Bangladesh, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Cameroon, China, Columbia, Congo (Zaire), Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, East Timor, Ecuador, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nepal, Nicaragua, Panama, Papua NG, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, Uganda, Venezuela, Vietnam, Windward Islands, and Zimbabwe. The literature supplied by TransFair Canada describes the life of several people from developing nations that they work with. One of them is Isabel G'omez of Honduras. The following information describes her environment and life:

Isabel G'omez thrusts her hand into a mound of dark, wet dirt and pulls out a fat, juicy worm. Isabel loves worms and her face lights up as she explains the process of

organic composting. She is an organic coffee farmer in southern Honduras and for the past two years has been selling a portion of her coffee in the fair trade market. Fair Trade ensures producers receive a decent wage-for their products.

Isabel G'omez lives in the community of San Nic'olas, Honduras with her 80-year-old mother, Bemardina and her aunt Paoulina. Isabel is a member of the small producer cooperative CARSBIL, is a spokesperson on the board of directors and a leader in a community women's organization through her church.

Like many of her neighbours, Isabel harvests a plot of land that is less than a hectare in size, but it is her own land and she is proud of the work she puts in to produce good quality, strictly high grown coffee. With the current world market prices of conventional coffee she receives between \$20-25 U.S. for one bag of green coffee (100 lbs.) and for the coffee she sells with the Fair Trade price she receives \$85- 90 U.S. With this price she is able to continue her plans to improve her farm.

After attending courses hosted by CARSBIL and other small producer cooperatives, Isabel decided to switch to organic coffee farming. "The courses are really good because we get the opportunity to meet producers from other cooperatives and discuss different methods of farming." The courses are part of a CARSBIL program paid for by a percentage of the Fair Trade coffee sold each year. Isabel takes part in courses that cover a range of topics such as marketing, business skills, organization, finances, economy, production, and management.

Using the profits from Fair Trade sales the cooperative purchased a hectare of land and with the community, constructed a warehouse and patio to dry their coffee. "This is the fruit of the Fair Trade market," says current president, Felipe Nery V'asquez Meza. "Right now with the low world market prices for conventional coffee, every bag of coffee sold with Fair Trade is of huge importance to the cooperative. Because every bag sold does make a difference we will continue trying to sell our coffee through FairTrade until the door to that market is closed."

Sales of certified FairTrade coffee in Canada grew over 700 per cent from 1998 to 2001. Last year they were over one million pounds. Following are a list of statistics that show their accomplishments in a short years:

- Coffees certified by TransFair Canada are available in hundreds of points of sale and offices across the country.
- 80 coffee roasters and importers throughout Canada are licensed to sell Fair Trade Certified coffee bearing the TransFair label. Roughly one quarter of these companies deal exclusively in Fair Trade coffee.
- TransFair Canada is the only third-party certification agency for Fair Trade practices in Canada.
- TransFair Canada receives funding from CIDA, churches, unions, and NGOs. In 2001, roughly 45 per cent of TFC's income came from license fees for the use of the label.
- TransFair Canada is the only Canadian affiliate of an international umbrella organization called FLO (Fair Trade Labelling Organizations) that registers and monitors producer organizations in the South.
- Over 300 cooperatives, representing 550,000 small farmers and their families, sell coffee through the FLO coffee register.

Fair Trade coffee cooperatives receive a minimum of \$1.26 U.S. per pound FOB for their coffee, and receive a premium if it is also certified organic. The world price is currently well below \$0.70 U.S. per pound.

Fair Trade Certified coffee is grown on small, family-run farms. These farmers typically grow their coffee in the shade of a taller forest canopy. These farmers also tend to avoid the use of pesticides. In 1999, 28 per cent of all Fair Trade Certified coffee was certified organic.

- Twenty-three countries throughout Latin America, Asia and Africa produce Fair Trade coffee.
- Fair Trade coffee has been available in Europe for about 13 years; sales reached \$300 million U.S. there in 1998.
- In Europe over 130 brands of Fair Trade coffee are available in over 35,000 supermarkets.

Usually the media continually reports disasters from developing nations. It certainly is a positive change and particularly in the Christmas season to hear of some very good work, particularly by Canadians to help farmers in Developing Nations. TransFair Canada is financed by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), 43 per cent licensing fees for certification and 45 per cent are from donations.



December 5, 1994 Davidson Leader

In the life time battle between farmers and “Wild Oats”, the wild oats are winning. Even with the help of the herbicide Avadex. Over the last 20 to 25 years I would say the farmers are getting “trounced” if I may apply a sports term to farming. The latest evidence of wild oats winning was an ad that appeared in the Coop flyer for the week of November 21st- 26th, 1994. It said;

Robin Hood Oats  
 1 kg Plus Fibre, 1.35 kg Quick    2<sup>19</sup> each  
 Wild of Large Flakes each

The flyer which was circulated to 674,693 households in Canada’s four western provinces is “made up” in the Federated Co-operative Office in Saskatoon, printed in Winnipeg and mailed out from there. The ad showed that not only would Wild Oat Oatmeal be available in Davidson it would be available at any Co-operative store in Western Canada and it would be available at the same sale price as “Quick” or “Large Flake” oatmeal.

In October of 1991 Sam Green, General Manager, of the now bankrupt Canadian Organic Producers Marketing Co-operative and I met with Robin Hood buyers from Toronto at their flour mill in Saskatoon. We were attempting to sell them certified organic oats and wheat.

I said “I hear you are marketing Wild Oat oatmeal in B.C”. They said “Yes and Alberta too.” I asked why not Saskatchewan?” They said “We don’t have enough wild oats”. The fact that Robin Hood are offering Wild Oat Oatmeal on sale in all four western provinces must mean there are more Wild Oats available.

The buyers admitted some what sheepishly that the price was right. Personally, I can’t think of a better deal for Robin Hood, prairie farmers are producing the wild oats which is considered dockage in any grain, legume or oil seed crop they grow. Farmers not only produce wild oats, they give them away and pay the freight on the dockage to the terminal elevators, where the wild oats are cleaned out for Robin Hood. (I am not aware of any other company marketing a Wild Oat product).

The demand for Wild Oats is not new. In 1952 I travelled to Winnipeg as a part of a delegation of about two hundred Saskatchewan Farm Union Members to meet the Canadian Wheat Board and Canadian Grain Commission. Many marketing and grain grading issues were discussed. However, the one that was most sensational was about the fact the Western Black Oats (Wild Oats) were being sold in Ontario for livestock feed. In fact the Board of Grain Commissioner showed us samples.

Why the interest in Wild Oats? About ten or twelve years ago researchers at the University of Saskatchewan announced that Wild Oats were more nutritious than tame oats.

It is quite understandable that Wild Oats are high in nutrition. Tame Oats will grow anywhere but Wild Oats only grow in the most fertile soil usually in low spots in the field. What infuriates farmers, is the fact that Wild Oats take over where they expect to have their best yield.

They will continue to be in demand for food. My cousin Norma, who lives on Vancouver Island uses Wild Oats oatmeal. She says she wouldn’t buy anything else

because it reminds her of Saskatchewan. She left here fifty seven years ago but I think she is still a little homesick.

Wild Oats are here to stay, Vern Bailey was manager of Arm River Farms at Davidson many years. They also had land at Redvers, SK. He took a two foot square working depth of soil from their Redvers farm to a laboratory and asked for a Wild Oat count. The report was there was about 100 bushels per acre of Wild Oat seed in the ground.

Avadex cost a minimum of \$11.00 per square acre plus application cost to apply. Wild Oats and many other weeds are building up a resistance to herbicide. Some farmers are spending as much as \$10,000.00a year to attempt to control their wild oats. What are the alternatives:

1. Move to cultural control.
2. Use the \$10,000.00 to make a down payment on a cleaning plant, keep all your dockage for livestock or poultry feed. Clean out and market your own Wild Oats.
3. If you buy a cleaner, sell only cleaned grain, you will receive higher grades and prices.
- 4 Do research to find out about other plants that we consider weeds that might have a high nutritional, medicinal or herbal value that we are presently giving away.
5. Ask the Board of Grain Commissioners to recognize Wild Oats as a grain.
6. Use the ten thousand dollars you save by moving to cultural control to take your farming partner on a Caribbean cruise.

The question is - Which one will it be or are there other alternatives?

April 21, 1997 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:  
Mr. Todd Ormann  
Territory Manager Assert  
Cyanamid Crop Protection  
200-5 Donald Street V  
Winnipeg, MB R3L 2T4

Dear Mr. Ormann:

Thank you for your letter of February 24, 1997, and your Assert Tank-Mix chart. I thought I should write to make you aware that your records are inaccurate. In your letter you state, "Our records show that you used Assert in 1996." I am a certified organic farmer and I haven't used agriculture chemicals for weed control for twenty-eight years. This year will be twenty-nine and I wasn't planning any changes.

In your "P.S." you say, "*Thank you for your business. As a participant in ASSERT TAKE TEN program, you automatically qualify for the 5,0(X) Loyalty Bonus points on the FarmLine Partners Program. We already have a record of your 1996 purchases so it is not necessary to send copies of your invoices.*" I am amazed that you have records of these purchases. Perhaps you would be kind enough to forward copies to me.

I am amazed that you are still trying to sell chemicals to control wild oats. On August 20, 1981, sixteen years ago, Dr. Sakti Jana and V Jim Naylor, geneticists from the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, were here at the farm collecting chemically free wild oat samples for research purposes. They were studying wild oat resistance to agriculture chemicals. They reported at the end of their study that wild oats were building up a resistance to chemicals and that it didn't make any difference if you rotated the chemicals.

In paragraph #2 of your letter you state, "*Assert is absorbed through both leaves and roots to maximize its effectiveness under all kinds of weather conditions.*" I assume it is also absorbed through the leaves and roots of the cereal, legume or oil seed crop that is also growing in the field. This is the reason certified organic crops are in demand, because many people are allergic to the chemical residues in all food crops where agriculture chemicals are used.

On page 3 of the publication, "Reducing Emissions", published by the Canadian Chemical Producers Association it states, "*Emissions of known and probable carcinogens declined by 28 percent in 1995 from 1994 levels for a total reduction of 51 percent since 1992.*" The publication was referring to the total amount of chemicals used on Canadian farms. This means that 49 percent of the agriculture chemicals used are carcinogens. In your letter you didn't mention whether "Assert" was a carcinogen or not. In fact, you didn't mention anything about what safety precautions to use.

It is apparent that you don't understand the value of wild oats. First wild oats are an indicator of good soil. They won't grow on poor soil. Secondly, University of Saskatchewan researchers reported many years ago that the nutritional value of wild oats was much higher than tame oats. I haven't heard any plant breeders claim they have produced a new oat that exceeds the nutritional value of wild oats.

Robin Hood (Mills) produces Wild Oat Oatmeal which they sell for almost twice the price of oatmeal made from commercial varieties of oats. I had occasion to meet a couple of their buyers a few years ago from Toronto when I was President of the Canadian Organic Producers Marketing Co-operative Ltd. I said, "I heard that you are marketing Wild Oat Oatmeal." They said, "Yes, but only in British Columbia and Alberta." When I asked why not in Saskatchewan or Manitoba they said, "We don't have enough wild oats but the price is right." It is obvious that Robin Hood understands how to salvage products and make a profit. Farmers don't get paid for the wild oats, they pay the freight to terminals and cleaning cost and Robin Hood makes the profit. Robin Hood understands both nutrition and economics.

It is obvious that if farmers decided to spend their "chemical budget" on grain cleaners on their farms or in rural communities, there could be thriving poultry and livestock enterprises all through the rural communities. The only cost would be of cleaning the grain, and many jobs could be created.

Mother Nature distributes the nutrition to all plants, not just the ones we plant. We have many untapped nutritional resources that are shipped out under the banner of "screenings". Perhaps the first step to salvage these resources would be to ask the Board of Grain Commissioners to declare wild oats a grain under the Canada Grain Act.

I am not for a minute suggesting that wild oats be grown as a crop. Wild oats can be controlled by cultivation, a rod weeder will roll them out of the ground if used two or three days after seeding cereal grains, a rotary harrow will work well in low spots in the field if pulled slowly. Only the seed within about a quarter of an inch from the surface germinates so they can be harrowed even after the cereal crop is up. I have fewer wild oats on my farm than I did when I quit using chemicals twenty-eight years ago. One Loreburn farmer said, "I have been spraying for forty-five years and I still have weeds. Why?" In the era prior to agricultural chemicals many farmers cut out the heavily infested areas for livestock feed just as the wild oats were heading out. It made very nutritious feed.

Frequently, we hear about the devastation of the Amazon Jungle and the destruction of plants that may have medicinal value for future generations. Perhaps it is time to look in farm fields to see what the medicinal potential is of the many weeds we are attempting to kill with chemical herbicides. We might just as well, as a result of weeds building up a resistance to herbicides, recognize agricultural chemicals are now obsolete. Perhaps if we start to examine the medical potential of the weeds we may find cures for some of the health problems that pesticides have caused in the last fifty years.

Sincerely  
Elmer Laird  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

May 1, 1995 Davidson Leader

The Superstore flyer used to appear in our Post Office mail box every Monday morning. However, it has been discontinued for some reason unknown to me. In mid-January, 1995, the flyer carried an ad for "Texas grown" fresh dandelion greens at \$.89 a bunch. I know that dandelions grow very well here but I didn't know enough people ate them to create a market demand. I have heard of some people, years ago before we had year-round lettuce in the stores, using them in salads early in the spring. Some people even considered them a necessary spring tonic. In one area of Saskatchewan, southeast of Swift Current, there were large families and poor diets at the end of the depression of the dirty Thirties. This was in the era before Welfare and Medicare. My father lived there at the time. He said that the Provincial Department of Health sent out a Home Economist to teach the community how to use dandelion greens to upgrade their diets.

In an article entitled "The Roots of Power" published in the January edition of *Alive: Canadian Journal of Health and Nutrition* writer Keith Stelling, MA, MNIMH said "One of God's most precious gifts to mankind has been the roots of the earth. They have allowed us to survive on this planet for thousands of years, sustaining life throughout the coldest winter months when other forms of vegetation were unavailable."

Stelling said "As natural medicines, the roots of herbs and bushes continue to protect us from disease. But many urban dwellers have forgotten the autumn and winter rituals associated with roots. At one time, when every farm in Canada was self-sufficient and when many homes had productive vegetable gardens, beets and carrots were collected in the fall and carefully stored in bushels of sand. As winter wore on and the light increased each day, the carrots could not help sprouting, reminding us that what we were eating was still entirely alive.

The roots of vegetables are powerful balancers of the body's chemistry. Carrot juice, for example, will correct either constipation or diarrhea. A "potassium broth" made from carrots, beets, potatoes and even parsley root or a bit of parsnip can effectively convert an acid condition to an alkaline one. Since acidity is characteristic of a number of chronic conditions, including arthritis and cancer, root vegetables are an obvious medicine of choice."

He said Herbalists have never forgotten the healing power of medicinal plant roots. Some of the earliest herbalists in Canada were known as root doctors. Fortunately, their precious recipes are still part of the formation of the modern phytotherapist and today's well-trained herbal practitioner might use up to 30 or 40 different medicinal plant roots in his clinical dispensary.

Botanically, roots are the storehouse of energy for the plants. The power of the sun has been converted by the plant's elegant system of photosynthesis. An unstable form of energy, sunlight, has been transformed into a stable one: carbohydrates. These can be stored in the root of the plant over the winter months. Despite short days and unfavourable conditions, this power is ready for release upward into new plant growth at the very outset of spring. That is why the herbalist must harvest his roots at a critical moment after the land has thawed, but before their precious energy has escaped to form leaves and flowers."

Stelling concludes "Best collected in the spring before the plant has flowered, (taking care, of course, that it has not been sprayed with carcinogenic chemical

pesticides), it is most effective if it is used fresh (without drying). One can chew small pieces of the fresh root or add them to salads. A dandelion “coffee” can be made by gently simmering a teaspoonful of the root in a cup of water for 10 minutes, straining and drinking three cups of this each day. Fortunately, it is available at the health food stores in the form of a fresh plant juice imported from the German firm Schoenenberger. The liver supportive factor that is built into this remedy makes it particularly safe and there is no mention of toxicity in any of the literature.”

Perhaps this spring when we are experiencing high prices for lettuce and other green vegetables it is time to give the dandelion a second chance. Dandelions grow well here as most people realize. Politicians are talking about developing markets for “value added” products. Could one of them be dandelions? Remember the alternative most people use is spraying with toxic 2,4-D or Round-up, that may cause cancer. The question is - will the lowly dandelion be given a chance?

Dr. Michelle Yao, a well known Registered Herbalist and Acupuncturist practising in Saskatoon recommends the book “Herbally Yours” by Penny Royal for information on herbal treatments (copy available at our library). She uses it for reference in her practice. On page 24 the author suggests dandelion may be used for the following health problems: acne, age spots, anemia, improve appetite, bladder, low blood pressure, blood purifier, boils, bronchitis, cancer, cleansing, constipation, cramps, diabetes, digestive disorders, eczema, endurance, energy, fatigue, fever, flu, fractures, gallbladder, gallstones, gout, heartburn, hemorrhage, hypoglycemia, insomnia, jaundice, kidneys, liver, pancreas, psoriasis, senility, skin problems, spleen, tonsillitis, vitality, water retention, wounds. The book states “Dandelion acts as a tonic to the system. It destroys acids in the blood. As it contains organic Sodium, it is very good for Anemia caused by a deficiency of Nutritive Salts, and is recognized as a great Blood Builder and Purifier. It is also effective as a Liver Cleanser. It is very high in Calcium and other Nutrients. It is a gentle laxative and can, therefore, be used in a tea for babies and children.”

# NATIONAL MANDATORY CERTIFICATION STANDARDS

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January 30, 1995

Canadian organic farmers and overseas buyers of organic food will be very pleased with recent developments in the organic food industry. On Monday, January 23, 1995, Allan Kerpan, M.P. for Moose Jaw-Lake Centre told a group of organic farmers meeting in his Kenaston office that he would work with Wayne Easter and other government members on the Agriculture Committee of the House of Commons to establish a national certification program to certify organic farms in Canada when he returned to Ottawa in February. Mr. Kerpan is a member of the Agriculture Committee of the House of Commons and chairman of the Agriculture Committee of the Reform Party caucus.

Nettie Wiebe, national president of the National Farmers Union said on Wednesday, January 25<sup>th</sup> that the NFIJ supports and will work for a national certification program for organic farmers. She went on to say "The NFU has always supported 'orderly marketing' and there must be national quality standards established to make 'orderly marketing' possible." She said "The NFU is prepared to work with other groups to achieve this goal." Wiebe concluded "The NFU is a national farm organization and can work very effectively across Canada to establish a National Certification program for organic products.

Organic producers have been attempting to establish national certification standards so Canadian and foreign buyers would be guaranteed a standard of purity of all products marketed. On July 22, 1991 Robbie Wotherspoon, President of the (now bankrupt) Canadian Organic Producers Marketing Cooperative wrote to Prime Minister Brian Mulroney asking him to "pass" a National Organic Certification Act by "Order in Council". A copy of the letter was sent to NDP Agriculture Critic, Vic Althouse, among others. Mr. Althouse raised the question with the Federal Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Bill McKnight. On September 13, 1991, McKnight wrote Robbie Wotherspoon assuring him that an "accreditation system" for certifying organic products will be in place by January of 1992.

Even though there has been an unfunded Canadian Organic Advisory Board promoting national organic certification standards no action was taken in the remaining two that the Conservative government was in power. The Liberal Government has not taken any action since they were elected either.

Demand for organic products from people who suffer from allergies to chemical residues in their food. In the main it appears that the more polluted the environment, the more people suffer from allergies. In fact, about a year ago a United Nations study reported that the air in four out of five of the major cities in the world was so polluted it wasn't fit for habitation. It is obvious the demand for certified organic products will grow quite rapidly in the future.

Neil Strayer of Drinkwater has been farming organically for 15 years and owns Growers International, a company that has been marketing organic products for 12 years. He reported at the Kenaston meeting that he had marketed 4,000 tonnes of wheat, barley and durum the first quarter of this year, would market another 3,000 to 4,000 tonnes but would be unable to fill orders for another 10,000 tonnes. All his products are marketed through the Canadian Wheat Board. He said "Organic cereal markets have been developed in Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, France, Belgium, Holland and some of the most protected unattainable market places in the world."

The Canadian Wheat Board started receiving requests for organic grain six or seven years ago. They held their first conference on marketing organic wheat, in Saskatoon in 1990. Attending the meeting were organic marketing organizations from Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec and buyers from England. At a second meeting in 1991 methods were discussed of shipping it by "Producer Car" directly to Thunder Bay, cleaning it and isolating it in the hold of a ship to maintain its identity on its way to Europe. Obviously the only hold up in the direct marketing of certified organic "Board" grains by the Canadian Wheat Board is the lack of National Organic Certification standards. Strayer said that there are about fifty certifying voluntary organizations for organic products in Canada. If the Federal Government would establish national standards similar to standards established for certified seed grain, all certifying agencies would have to meet the national standard. Most agencies have agrologists inspecting members' farms now. The buyers of organic food demand what is known as an "audit trail." That means if a consumer complained about the quality anywhere in the world it can be traced back to the farmer's field where it was grown.

In 1991, Federal Agriculture Minister Bill McKnight wrote to the Secretary of the European Common Market guaranteeing him that national standards for certifying organic products would be established by January, 1992, so marketing could continue. Strayer says it is much more difficult to comply with the "red tape" to continue marketing because the Federal Government has not taken any action.

The question is will the recent decision taken by Reform Party M.P. Allan Kerpan and the National Farmers Union motivate the Government to put an "accreditation system" in place for certifying organic products.



January 15, 1996 Davidson Leader

Earl Geddes, Program Manager, Market Development, Canadian Wheat Board has extended a cordial invitation to all organic producers to attend one or both of the two information meetings to be held in Saskatchewan. The meetings will take place on January 18<sup>th</sup> in Saskatoon in the Manitoba Room of the Saskatoon Inn and on January 19<sup>th</sup> in Regina, in the Newport Room of the Regina Inn. The meetings will run from 1:00 to 4:00p.m.

Geddes said, "The focus of the meetings will be twofold. First the meeting will provide an explanation of how the CWB currently interacts with the organic industry. This will include a description of CWB pooling, CWB buyback and how the CWB treats pooling and marketing costs. The second focus of the meeting will be to discuss the most appropriate options for the relationship between the CWB and the organic industry. The focus of these discussions is to provide information and to solicit the views of organic wheat and barley growers."

He said, "The option of establishing a special grade for organic grain, separate pools for organic grain and the exclusion of organic grain from the CWB have been put forward during our discussions. The meetings will allow time for consideration of the impact of each option and input on what is in the best long-term interest of the organic grains industry in Western Canada."

Geddes concluded, "A national certification process has been developed in consultation with the federal government and the Canadian Organic Advisory Board. The possibility of establishing national standards for certification during 1996 is very real. The CWB views the establishment of national standards as a positive step from a marketing standpoint and is interested in your views on how the CWB can help the industry take the greatest advantage from the national standards."

The Canadian Wheat Board has been receiving inquiries and orders for certified organic grain from buyers in many parts of the world, particularly England and Europe for nine or ten years. The orders have been supplied by individual organic farmers, marketers or marketing coops who sold the wheat to the Canadian Wheat Board, bought it back and shipped it. The grain had to be shipped in containers to maintain its identity or keep it separate from chemically raised grain. Groups of organic producers developed their own certification standards that were accepted by the grain trade. In 1990, the CWB held its first meeting in Saskatoon on marketing certified organic grain. The following year British Flour Millers attended and plans were made to ship grain from a producer's local delivery point by "producer car" to the Lakehead. The certified organic grain from all the producer cars would go in one hold in a ship to maintain its identity. The British millers would be responsible for maintaining organic identity once the ship arrived in England. The only problem was the fact that organic producers didn't have national certification standards and the CWB were reluctant to enter into direct marketing of organic grains. Organic producers have been attempting to establish certification standards for many years. In fact, the Hon. Bill McKnight, Minister of Agriculture at that time, promised he would have organic certification standards in place by January 1, 1992. It is hoped that grades and standards can be established for the 1996-97 crop year so organic producers will have an improved value added marketing system for their organic products.

November 4, 1996 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:

Mr. Bill Morse, Director  
Food Production and Inspection Branch  
Saskatchewan Agriculture  
Ms. Deanne Belisle, Program Leader  
Canada-Saskatchewan Agri-Food  
Innovation Agreement

Dear Mr. Morse and Ms. Belisle:

Re: Marketing certified organic meat and poultry

The announcement of the \$91 million Canada-Saskatchewan Innovation Agreement on August 2, 1996, by Agriculture Ministers Goodale and Upshall may open up new opportunities for the marketing of “certified organic” products. Federal contribution is \$64 million, provincial contribution is \$27 million. This is the first time the two ministers of Agriculture have jointly supported sustainable agriculture. It appears they are recognizing the growing market for certified organic food. This is also the first indication that agriculture is moving away from promoting “chemical agriculture only” policies.

Today many certified organic farmers are growing alfalfa and clover in their crop rotation. They are also looking more seriously at the marketing of certified organic beef, pork and poultry. In the past, marketing organic meat products has been very difficult because of lack of facilities and complicated meat inspection systems. However, the Federal and Provincial governments have said for some time they are going to harmonize their meat inspection regulations. I sincerely hope while they are harmonizing regulations they facilitate the marketing of certified organic meat.

In the past, meat and poultry marketed in Regina or Saskatoon required Federal Inspection, while Provincial inspection was required in other parts of the province. Ten or fifteen years ago there were quite a number of slaughter houses that had federal meat inspectors, then many of them were laid off. This meant many more miles of travel for farmers marketing certified organic meat. Farmers have always had the legal right to market any farm products at the farm gate. However, it is very difficult for a certified organic farmer who produces meat or poultry to get their product slaughtered where the identity of the animal or fowl would be preserved and it could be federally inspected at the same time.

Organic producers of meat and poultry must meet the regulations of their organic certification organization and all federal and provincial health regulations as well.

“Organic certification” means there must be an “audit trail” from the farmer’s field or livestock and poultry facilities to the consumer’s table. This means if the consumer is concerned about pesticide contamination of any food product they purchased, it can be traced back to the farm where it was produced. If the product is marketed through a processor, wholesaler and retailer, everyone must keep records to maintain the “audit trail”. This is in addition to the requirements of federal and provincial

meat inspectors. In addition, organic producers will need to know how to obtain an export permit and what information is required to export meat and poultry.

Some people refer to the certified organic meat and poultry market as only a niche market. However, consumers are becoming very concerned about food products. Journalists writing in “health” magazines have made them aware of hormones being used in meat and poultry production to increase weight. They know that about fifty percent of the antibiotics used in Canada is used in livestock and poultry feed. They have heard about “Mad Cow disease” (BSE) and its human equivalent, Cruetzfeldt-Jakob disease, in England caused by feeding dead animal meat (protein) to domestic animals. They know that dead meat and also poultry litter is being used in livestock, poultry and pet food products in Canada. There is very little doubt marketing of certified organic meat and poultry products will be in great demand in the very near future in both the domestic and export markets. Marketing certified organic livestock and poultry is a very complex question but a very important one.

**Recommendations:**

7. The Canada-Saskatchewan Agri-Food Innovation Agreement should employ a Food Consultant knowledgeable in organic production to carry out a study to find the most efficient ways to market certified organic meat and poultry products for the domestic and export markets; and 2. The “study” should be made available to all farm organizations, producer groups, Farm Service Centres, 4-H Clubs, College and School of Agriculture and display booths at agricultural fairs.

Sincerely  
Elmer Laird, President  
Back To The Farm Research Foundation

December 9, 1996 Davidson Leader

The November 4, 1996, edition of "The Davidson Leader" published an "open letter" I wrote to Mr. Bill Morse, Director, Food Production and Inspection Branch, Saskatchewan Agriculture and Ms. Deanne Belisle, Program Leader, Canadian-Saskatchewan Agri-Food Innovation Agreement about marketing certified organic meat and poultry. Following is Mr. Morse's reply.

Dear Mr. Laird:

Re: Marketing Certified Organic Meat & Poultry

*Thank you for your letter dated November 7, 1996, on the above subject. I will endeavour to answer your questions on the above matter as it related to Federal Meat Inspection.*

*Presently any meat or meat products moving interprovincially must be slaughtered and/or processed under the Federal Inspection program. In addition to this, we presently provide provincial inspection at 10 domestic plants in Saskatchewan under the Federal/Provincial Meat Inspection Program. The domestic plant standards are set by the Provincial Government and do not allow for interprovincial movement. Domestic inspection can allow the company access to certain markets such as Regina and Saskatoon. Harmonization of federal and provincial regulations is being negotiated but any final decisions are not imminent.*

*At this time, there are no plans to include organic food standards in federal meat legislation as a system to facilitate the marketing of Certified Organic Meat. Organic food standards and the certification of organic food have been seen as an industry responsibility. Any initiatives in this regard in the past have been led by the industry and I don't anticipate any change in this in the short term.*

*I have enclosed a copy of a policy developed late last year that deals with certifying the freedom from hormonal growth promotants. This policy was developed to assist the export of meat and meat products in to the European (EU) Market who have laid down very strict rules regarding the use of growth promotants. Meat and meat products must be slaughtered in plants built to EU standards before they can be considered for this program. Presently we have few plants in Canada that have been built and are functioning at these specific standards. I am providing you with this information as I thought you might find it a good reference you wish to develop a certification system for organic meat in the future.*

*I have spoken to Deanne Belisle and she will write you separately to address your comments/questions regarding the Agri-Food Innovation Fund. I trust the information I have provided you has clarified what you can expect in the near future and the document attached will be useful reference material*

Yours sincerely,  
Bill Morse, P.Ag.  
Director of Operations (Sask.)

Note: The regulations Mr. Morse enclosed for producing meat for the European Market are seven pages long and space doesn't permit publishing them here. However, if you would like a copy, they are available at the Davidson Rural Service Centre.

Elmer Laird, President Back To The Farm  
Research Foundation

March 9, 1998 Davidson Leader

(Continued from Mar. 2, 1998)

Open letter to:  
Mr. Justice Willard Estey, Q.C.  
Head, Review of Western  
Canada's Grain Handling and  
Transportation System  
Suite 1405, 180 Dundas Street West  
Toronto, ON M5G 1Z8

Please note. I received the above address from the Federal Minister of Agriculture, Ralph Goodale's office. The address below appeared in "Union Farmer". I faxed copies of past "open letters" to Justice Estey at both addresses and received telephone calls from both offices saying they were the right one. Both offices said that they hoped to hear from lots of farmers. The other address is:

Place de Ville, Tower B, Suite 870  
112 Kent Street,  
Ottawa, ON K1P 5P2  
Fax 613-998-9119

Dear Sirs:

Introduction, Part 7: Certified Organic Production and Marketing.

Dr. Stuart Hill, Entomologist and Director of Ecological Agriculture, MacDonald College, McGill University, Ste. Anne de Bellevue, PQ, told farmers and environmentalists attending a conference entitled "Chemicals and Agriculture: Problems and Alternatives" held at Fort Qu'Appelle, SK, on November 3rd to 4th, 1977, that there were two methods of growing plants. One was to maintain soil nutrition and fertility by natural means such as growing legumes in crop rotations and applying compost or manure. The other was to use the soil as a method of holding up the plant and use artificial fertilizers to feed the plants. Since that conference the use of chemical fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides have rapidly increased and so have the numbers of certified organic farmers. The organic industry is growing in the United States at the rate of twenty percent per year and has been for many years.

Chemical agriculture is in trouble as both weeds and pests have built up a resistance to pesticides and herbicides so that increasing amounts of chemicals are required to achieve the same results.

Genetic engineering is developing herbicide resistant plants,, which means more herbicides are being used. There is also concern the "herbicide resistance" is moving into the weed population and some even suggest it might be moving to humans.

In an article in the February 26, 1998, edition of the "Western Producer", Allan Cessna told journalist, Michael Raine, "Some farm dugouts, considered to have drinkable

water by Saskatchewan families, contain levels of pesticides as much as one thousand times more detectable than in European water supplies.” He went on to say, “I have yet to analyse water from a dugout that didn’t contain pesticide residue. Residue can be found groundwater as well. Farmers and custom applicators will begin to void pesticide residue through their urine within twenty-four hours of beginning to spray. Their exposure to the product is ninety-eight percent dermal (skin) and mainly comes through the hands. People not even involved in spraying will show levels of exposure.” There is little doubt as pesticide and herbicide use increases our air and food will contain more chemical residue. The demand for “certified organic” food will rapidly accelerate in the next millennium.

The “organic certification” system used by the forty-odd organic certification organizations across Canada provides what is referred to as an “audit trail”. That means everyone from the farmer’s field to the consumer’s table must be “certified organic” to handle the food.

Certified organic farmers are now starting to think of themselves as producers of nutrition. We can only get nutrition from three sources - land, lakes and sea. We haven’t managed to look after our fish resources very well and we have a shortage of fish. We haven’t looked after the nutritional resources of the soil very well either. In Mother Nature’s ecological cycle the nutrients from all plant, animal and human waste returned to the soil not far from where the plants grew that supplied food to wildlife, domestic animals and humans. However, we have ignored Mother Nature’s ecological cycle for many years; i.e., animal, poultry and fish bones that contain calcium plus other nutrients end up in the garbage dump and leaves that contain minerals from deep down in the ground are burned or go to the garbage dump. Garbage dumps are excellent sources of nutrition. Perhaps that is why the rats live so well in them.

Large volumes of food go to the large population centres and the nutrients in human waste, with the help of flush toilets, end up in the rivers or go out to sea. The Chinese are the only people I have heard of who return human waste to the land.

We also lose a lot of nutrition by processing foods. The rapidly growing health food industry is evidence of the shortage of nutrition in Canadian food on superstore shelves. Volumes of food doesn’t necessarily mean volumes of nutrients.

In some instances agriculture chemical inhibit the plant from accessing nutrients in the soil. Many of our customers around the world understand a lot more about nutrition than we do. Many countries do not have the wide variety of foods we have and have to be very concerned about what they buy. If the “value added” policies of our federal and provincial governments are going to be successful they will have to add “nutrition and quality” to “value added”.

The Canadian Wheat Board has been receiving requests for “certified organic” wheat and barley from world markets since about 1986 to 1987. They held conferences in Saskatoon in 1990 and 1991 to work out a transport system that would protect the identity of grain from the prairie farmers’ fields to the consumers’ tables in England. British millers attended.

However, the Canadian Wheat Board has refused to market the grain directly because we don’t have national organic certification standards. We don’t have national certification standards because of the powerful chemical lobby. Cliff Jones, an early organic farmer from Netherhill, SK, pioneered the “buy- back” program in the early 1970s. To date, even though the Canadian Wheat Board has a monopoly, they have

refused to exercise it to buy certified organic grain. The Canada Grain Commission operates a laboratory in Winnipeg to test for chemical residue in grain. Buyers from some countries set very stringent limits on the amount of chemical residue they permit in the grain they buy.

Recommendation 17: The Canada Grain Commission recognize “certified organic” grain, oil- seeds and legumes as separate grades from conventional grades.

Recommendation 18: Recognize that certified organic board grains should be marketed directly by the Canadian What Board. They have a monopoly, they should live up to it.

Recommendation 19: Recognize that all certified organic grains, oil- seeds and legumes should be recognized as separate grains for the purpose of transportation.

Elmer Laird, President  
Back To the Farm  
Research Foundation

To Be Continued.



September 21, 1998 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:  
Mr. Lyle Vanclief  
Federal Minister of Agriculture  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON

Dear Mr. Vanclief:

Re: National Certification Program For Organic Production

“Tateno International”, a family trading and import company of Tokyo, Japan, was established in 1874. Presently it purchases about \$150,000,000 worth of food products from North America. Mr. Hiroo Tateno and his assistant, Mr. Tadashi Yasui, Manager of Foodstuffs Department of the Tateno Corporation, visited organic farms in the Swift Current and Bethune districts of Saskatchewan on Saturday, September 12 and Monday, September 14, 1998. In addition, they visited a scientist at the Canada Research Station in Swift Current. In the absence of a National Certification Program for Organic Products they wanted to meet certified organic farmers and visit their farms to determine firsthand their credibility in meeting organic certification standards. The farm visits were arranged by Bruce Hoggard, CEO of Hoggard and Associates, who are international marketing consultants in Saskatoon. Hoggard is also Executive Director of the Provincial Export Association (PEA). The Provincial Export Association represents a voluntary group of about two hundred Saskatchewan companies whose common interest is marketing Saskatchewan products. Hoggard and Associates have offices in Singapore and Malaysia in addition to Canada.

Hoggard met Tateno when he was on a business trip to Tokyo last May and persuaded him to come to Saskatchewan for a couple of days to look at certified organic farms on his next buying trip to North America.

Food buyers from both Asia and Europe are becoming more aware that certified organic farmers are the only ones who are producing the kind of food products the consumer wants. In the United States about eighty percent of the food produced is consumed in the US and twenty percent exported. It is, in the main, marketed by transnational corporations (many American owned) that have taken the attitude that they will market the product that they will make the most money out of and if the “off shore” customers reject it they will use international treaties or whatever other means they have at their disposal to sell it.

Here in Canada we consume about twenty percent of the food we produce and export eighty percent. We have fallen into the American method of producing the food we think we can make the most profit on and have forgotten about quality (i.e. hormone-fed beef, using antibiotics in the food rations of livestock and poultry and marketing genetically-engineered herbicide-resistant canola).

Prior to the federal government passing the *Plant Breeders' Rights Act* about ten years ago Canada enjoyed a very good reputation for producing high quality food for the marketplace. However, now since transnational corporations are exercising increasingly

more control over the quality of the crops we grow, our low prices today reflect the quality of the food we are offering in the national and international marketplace.

On Saturday, September 12, 1998, Robbie Wotherspoon of Success, SK, a national and international marketer of organic products, took the Japanese visitors to the Canada Agriculture Research Station in Swift Current to meet some of the plant breeders, then to visit the farm of Ken and Dianne Hymers. Hymers is Secretary of the Canadian Organic Producers Certification Co-operative Ltd. Hymers farms 1756 acres (about eleven quarter sections). He has 155 acres in native grass and 875 acres in seeded grasses. This year he grew flax, rye, spring wheat, barley and twenty acres of hemp. Ken has a ninety-cow beef herd and markets certified organic beef. Hymers went through the thirty-page document that sets out all the rules and regulations governing certified organic farmers. They toured the farm, looking particularly at the varieties of grain, and visited the hemp field which had just been swathed. They discussed the seeded forage soil improvement program and how it would improve production and quality of food.

Monday, September 14, 1998, they visited two certified organic farms at Bethune, SK. They were owned and operated by Merv Ermel and his son, Ron, and John Ermel and his son, Barry. Merv and Ron have a seven-quarter section farm that has four-hundred acres in native pasture. They grew hulless barley, mailing barley and yellow mustard and hemp this year (not harvested yet). They have seventy-five head of beef cows and market certified organic beef. John and Barry have thirteen quarters of land with six hundred acres in native pasture. They grew lentils, hulless barley, flax and oats and also have seventy-five head of beef cattle that are certified organic.

Neil Strayer, President of Growers International Inc. who has been marketing certified grain nationally and internationally for about fifteen years, is a certified organic farmer from Drinkwater, SK. He was at the Ermel farms on Monday and took an active part in the discussion on organic certification and food quality. Hoggard, the international business consultant, brought our guest to the Ennel farms and took an active part in the discussion that went on in the farm yards.

Considerable time was spent in Ermels' house discussing the superior quality of certified organic, whole-wheat, stone-ground flour. We used a small flour mill that mills stone-ground flour and preserves all the nutrition for the demonstration. Stone ground flour is a milling process that grinds the flour at a very low temperature so the wheat germ will not go rancid, therefore all the nutrition possible remains in the flour. We made a tour of all the grain bins and discussed the quality and uses of grains raised on the two farms which are one-half mile apart. We looked at the cattle in Merv Ermel's pasture and discussed the certified organic method of raising cattle. Tateno asked Ermel if he ever used antibiotics if a cow got sick. Ermel said that he had. He explained that the cattle were all certified by number and if he used antibiotics (which he rarely had) that cow went to the conventional market. The Japanese guests were presented with an ice cream pail full of certified organic, whole-wheat, stone-ground flour when they left.

Well, Mr. Vanclief, it is obvious that the market for certified organic food products is going to rapidly increase in the near future. It is also obvious that we need a national organic certification program so foreign or local buyers will have confidence in the organic marketplace and not have to travel from farm to farm to talk to individual producers if they want to make a purchase. Everyone on the tour enjoyed meeting our

potential customers but we need a national organic certification program to upgrade our trading or marketing practices.

Sincerely,  
Elmer Laird, President  
Back to the Farm Research Foundation

October 26, 1998 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:

All District 6 Wheat Board Candidates in the first election campaign for Directors;

Wayne Bacon, Kinistino

Allan M. Buerchailo, Domremy

Chad Doerksen, Dalmeny

Gany Michael Dubyk, Hanley

Bany FL. Firby, Kenaston

Dmytro (Dan) Kachur, Lanigan

Russel Joseph Grant Marcoux, Saskatoon

Ian Lorne McCreary, Bladworth

Mich P. Ozeroff, Langham

Dear Candidates:

The Canadian Wheat Board has a mandate which I have wholeheartedly supported for over fifty years to market all "board grains". However, to date it has not marketed directly certified organic "board grains" (presently spring wheat, durum and barley). It has had the mandate since 1943. Ever since there was a recognized demand for "chemically free" or "organic board grains", certified organic farmers have had to sell their grain to the Canadian Wheat Board, buy it back and do their own marketing, arrange shipping and collect the bills. This marketing process is known as "buy-back" and has been going on for at least twenty-five years. I am writing to ask you if you are elected a Director of the Canadian Wheat Board, would you attempt to have certified organic "board grains" marketed directly by the Canadian Wheat Board? It would have several advantages for certified organic farmers and their customers.

1. Most important, the Canadian Wheat Board would be living up to its mandate 'to market all board grains.

2. Volume marketing by the Canadian Wheat Board would permit better blending of protein content and falling numbers (gluten content) to meet consumer demands or orders.

3. Certified organic farmers would have direct access to the expert marketing staff and other facilities of the Canadian Wheat Board.

4. Certified organic farmers would have the benefit of having the Canadian Wheat Board collect the money for the grain sold. In some instances farmers have bought their grain back from the "board" at the board selling price, paid high shipping charges and they have not been able to collect for their product, shipping charges or other costs of marketing.

5. Wheat Board marketing of certified organic grains would eliminate the high cost of "container" shipping to overseas markets which is about three times the bulk rate and return more money to the producer.

6. Wheat Board marketing of certified organic grains would permit the pooling of premiums received for organic grains.

7. Orderly marketing of certified organic “board grains” would assure producers that all their products would be marketed. Some organic grain is still going into the conventional markets and organic farmers are losing their premium.

In 1990, 1991 and 1992 the Canadian Wheat Board held meetings with certified organic producers in Saskatoon to discuss methods of overseas marketing of certified organic “board grains”. British flour millers were at the meetings and an agreement was reached to ship certified organic grain from the producers’ delivery points in “producer cars” to terminal elevators and store it separately to maintain its identity. It would then be shipped overseas in the “hold” of a ship, (partitioned if necessary) to its overseas destination. Millers would be responsible for maintaining the identity of the product overseas. The quality and pesticide testing laboratories of the Canada Grain Commission would play an important role in assuring quality of certified organic “board grains” to customers. The method of marketing has been in place since 1992.

In my own case I stopped using agricultural chemicals in 1969 because of the economic crisis, low quotas and low prices (sound familiar). Twenty years ago in July, 1978, I sold my first load of certified organic grain to a buyer, Dave Reibling, from Tavistock, ON, using the “buy-back” method and have been doing it ever since. So have many other organic producers. The reason the Canadian Wheat Board did not proceed with marketing certified organic “board grains” in 1992 was because we didn’t have a National Organic Certification program in place. We have been trying to get one for at least twelve years but the chemical lobby is very strong and the federal government and all provincial governments promote “chemical agriculture” only. The US doesn’t have national standards either; however, the organic marketing of agriculture products is a multi-million dollar business in the US and is rapidly increasing in Canada. In Canada there are over forty certification agencies or organizations. Their standards are all very similar. They are certainly adequate to guarantee quality of product. Here in Saskatchewan, Sask. Wheat Pool has bought the Humboldt Flour Mill to handle certified organic products only and are planning on opening several grain elevators around the province to buy certified organic grains, legumes and oil seeds.

More farmers are moving to organic production every year because of economic, health and environmental concerns. I sincerely hope that if you are elected you will make sure the Canadian Wheat Board lives up to its mandate and markets all “board grains” including certified organic.

Sincerely,  
Elmer Laird, President  
Back to the Farm Research Foundation

January 31, 2000 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:

Dr. Robert McDonald, Executive Director, Canadian Organic Advisory Board Inc.

Dear Dr. McDonald:

Re: Future challenges to the organic industry and COAB Education Program to inform consumers about the Organic Certification Process

Certified organic farmers need the help of organic food consumers to make the national organic certification program work. It requires the understanding of the consumer and at times to challenge the quality of our products by the consumer to give it credibility. At last count there were 47 certification organizations across Canada. Now we have a national program and all the standards of the volunteer programs will have to meet or exceed the national program.

In organic production we have what we call an audit trail from the producer to consumer.

I am certified organic by the Canadian Organic Certification Cooperative Ltd., Box 2468, Swift Current, Sask. S9H 4X7, (306) 773- 9899. My membership or certification number is 0017. That number and the lot number will be marked on every bag of my products wherever it goes in North America.

If you bought my radish seed in a health store in Dallas, Texas or St. Johns, Newfoundland, that number should be on the container or the operators' of the stores must be able to provide the number. The product can then be traced back to my farm where the radish; in this instance, is produced.

If it were bread, my number would be on the bread wrapper. I know my own production best so perhaps I should use my radish crop as an example. I harvested my radish seed last fall (1999). It is presently stored in a granary certified as organically safe storage. I was fortunate to get a spell of dry, windy weather while harvesting. Ten per cent is the highest moisture content allowable. However, the moisture content in my radish seed was 6.3 per cent.

Shortly after the harvest of my radish seed, I sent a sample to Mumms Organic Sprouting Seeds Hazelridge Farm, Box 268, Shellbrook, Sask., SOJ 2E0, (306) 747-2935, for testing. Mumms market 30 different kinds of certified organic sprouting seeds all over North America. Mumms send their samples to B.D.S. Laboratories in Qu'Appelle, Sask. to test for E. Coli and salmonella. When the report came back, Jim Mumm informed me that the sample did not show any signs of either E. Coli or salmonella. The tests are carried out on the seeds after they are sprouted at the laboratory. He said he would market them.

I am presently waiting for a call to send my radish seed to the cleaning plant Mumms use for some of their seeds which is certified for cleaning organic seed. After the radish seed is cleaned, Mumms take a sample out of every tenth bag and forward it to the laboratory for testing again. The seed is not marketed for human food unless it is free of E. Coli and salmonella and passes the test a second time.

Mumms Sprouting Seeds Hazelridge Farm is certified organic by Organic Crop Improvement Association (O.C.I.A.). They are also certified by Farm Verified Organic (F.V.O.65) which is recognized by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements. Jensens Seed Cleaning Plant, who will clean the radish seed for Mumms is certified to clean organic seed by O.C.I.A.

My number is used instead of my name because if there is a complaint it goes to the certification agency that investigates the complaint with the producer member. People who are certified to handle the product along the line will be investigated if necessary. I, or anyone else involved in the marketing of my product, could lose their organic certification if found at fault.

If E. Coli or salmonella were found in a half dozen places in North America, Mumms would be out of business. Jim and Maggie Mumm own Mumms Organically Grown Sprouting Seeds and Jim says that in all the tests they have forwarded over the years there has never been one containing E. Coli or salmonella. He is a firm believer in the nutritional value of sprouting seeds. He says sprouting is a very simple procedure and if young people learn how to sprout, it is a skill they will use to their advantage the rest of their lives.

The steps taken above are similar to marketing any certified organic cereal grains, oil seeds, legumes, vegetables, fruits, herbs, livestock and poultry. However, the final test is made in the stomach of the consumer who buys the food. That is the reason it is so important for the consumer to have first hand knowledge of the organic certification process. Consumers must also have an opportunity to have input into the process to make it work.

### **Plant Breeders Rights Act must be rescinded**

No one should have the right to patent and control seeds from any plant. There should be a class action to challenge the *Plant Breeders Rights* legislation in court. We had a good system of plant breeding in Canada until 1991. All plant breeding prior to 1991 was carried out by Agriculture Canada Research or at universities. Plant breeders worked closely with farmers to find out growing problems. Over the years they developed rust resistant wheat, sawfly resistant wheat, higher yielding, higher protein varieties that required a shorter growing season, more drought resistant varieties which were of particular importance here in Western Canada. All the work was paid for by taxpayers' dollars. Today transnational corporations are attempting to control all seeds and collect a royalty for using them. The transnational's have no concerns about the environment although they say they do. However, all press reports indicate all the new varieties are herbicide resistant which means herbicides will always be used. The transnational corporations are more interested in controlling the farms and farmers than they are in cleaning up the environment and developing a useful product that will be in demand in the international marketplace. For example, genetically engineered canola is completely rejected by Europe. Japan is going to start labelling G.E. products in 2001. The unwritten law of commerce is if you want to stay in the business produce what the consumer wants.

**Genetically engineered or modified plants may be a threat to all farmers, not just organic.**

We know the pollen from genetically engineered canola will drift up to five miles and pollute other variations of canola. It is not known yet what the effects will be on native plants and we will not know for some time.

In an article in the *Manitoba Cooperator*, London, England by journalist Patricia Reaney entitled *Root-borne insecticide may be naughty or nice*. It said:

American scientists said last week they had uncovered what could be either a potential hazard, or benefit, of genetically modified corn.

Dr. Guenther Stotzky and researchers at New York University have shown that bt corn, the seed variety which is resistant to corn borer pests, releases an insecticide through its roots into the soil.

The toxin remains in the soil as it is not easily broken down. It retains its insecticide properties which could help to control pests or promote insects resistant to the pesticide—the scientists aren't sure which.

"Further investigations will be necessary to shed light on what might happen underground," Stotzky and his colleagues said in a report in the science journal *Nature*.

Their work is the first to show that the toxin from the genetically engineered bt corn can seep into the soil.

Stotzky said so far there was little evidence that GM technology was potentially harmful but the discovery would add to the confusion about the safety of GM crops.

About 15 million acres of bt corn were planted in the United States in 1998, which represents about 20 per cent of the total acreage of corn.

"There is a potential hazard that it (the toxin) builds up and could enhance the selection of resistant target organisms and could possibly effect non-target organisms," Stotzky said in a telephone interview.

"Theoretically it could affect any organism that is susceptible to the toxin."

The bt corn contains the genes that allow it to produce the insecticide. The amount of it in the plant is minimal so the hazard to people eating it is essentially nonexistent, he said.

But Stotzky called for more studies to determine the impact of the toxin's buildup in the soil on insects and other organisms.

"Those studies need to be done. They should have been done a long time ago before the regulatory agencies allowed the release of these plants."

The transnationals may destroy the earth's ability to feed its six billion people.

Elmer Laird, president  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation



January 20, 2003 Davidson Leader

### **Time for change**

Open letter to:

Mr. Charles Hubbard, MP, chairman and members of the House of Commons,  
Agriculture and Agri-Food Committee

Dear Mr. Hubbard,

Attached to this letter is a copy of our Organic Production Certificate for the Back to the Farm Research Foundation. Please note it is authorized by the United States Department of Agriculture (U.S.D.A.) National Organic Program.

It is a sad day when Canadian organic farmers are unable to obtain their organic certification from our own federal department of agriculture. We have been trying for 15 years to obtain a mandatory organic certification standards program without any success. In fact it has been over 26 years since I sold my first load of organic grain to a buyer from Ontario. It is true that the volunteer certifying organization (we have 11 in Saskatchewan) could obtain mandatory organic certification from the standards. However, it is expensive. If we want to sell our certified organic products in the markets of the world where there is an ever increasing demand, the USDA is the route we have to take.

If you are not prepared to put a mandatory organic certification program in place for next year, then it is time you told Canadian consumers the truth. It is time to admit that our federal and all our provincial governments are dominated by the transnational drug and chemical companies.

The transnational drug and pesticide corporation lobby is so all-powerful that all politicians regardless of party will not take a stand against the powerful chemical and drug lobby.

Mr. Hubbard, I am a Royal Canadian Air Force veteran of WWII. I thought we were fighting for a number of freedoms in WWII., including political. We don't have it and our Ottawa political warriors (politicians) are not living up to our expectations.

I think that since your government passed Kyoto, it is now time to drop your support of chemical agriculture. The cost of chemicals are bankrupting many farmers and most weeds are building up a resistance to them and are ineffective, and pollution of our water is increasing. Organic farmers are cleaning up the environment and producing top quality food for the nation and our overseas customers and our government gives us the impression they are embarrassed about that. Time for change.

Elmer Laird, President  
Back to the Farm Research Foundation

January 26, 2004

### **Canada Grain Commission urged to take responsibility in organic certification**

Open letter to Bob Speller, federal Agriculture Minister; Chris Hamlin, chief commissioner, Canadian Grain Commission; Adrian Measner, president and CEO, Canadian Wheat Board; Arnold Taylor, president, Saskatchewan Organic Directorate; Janine Gibson, national president, Canadian Organic Growers (COG) and training coordinator, Independent Organic Inspectors Association (IOTA); and Stuart Wells, national president, National Farmers Union.

Re: Requesting the Canada Grain Commission to take responsibility for the organic certification of all cereal grains, oil seeds and legumes produced in Canada and marketed locally, nationally or internationally.

Mr. Ken Hymers, with the Certification Bureau of the Canadian Organic Certification Co-operative Ltd., Swift Current, Sask., sent me the following statement about the Canadian Grain Commission he recently found on his website. It was entitled *Canadian Identity Preserved Recognition System (CIPRS)*. It said:

*Canada has maintained an enviable reputation for supplying domestic and world markets with safe, high quality grains, oilseeds, and pulses. In a marketplace with ever-increasing demands for unique product specifications and traceability, there are many new opportunities for agricultural products. A key factor in capitalizing on these opportunities is industry's ability to deliver products with better quality assurance systems. Although industry is taking the lead in implementing these systems, the Canadian Grain Commission has developed a new voluntary pilot program to oversee and officially recognize those programs in order to maximize their acceptance in global markets. The Canadian Identity Preserved Recognition System is a new tool the industry can use to provide third party assurance of the processes they are using to deliver the specific quality attributes their domestic and international buyers are demanding.*

As a retired farmer who farmed for 55 years (the last 35 organic), I agree wholeheartedly with the above statement by the Canadian Grain Commission. However, with the increasingly rapid development of the certified organic production of cereal grains, oil seeds and legumes, we are faced with making some changes or we will be faced with mass duplication of services or possibly a drop in the quality of standards established and enforced by the Canadian Grain Commission (formerly the Canadian Board of Grain Commissioners) which will very likely mean a drop of Canada's high quality of standards in the international marketplace. The Canadian Grain Commission was established in 1912 and the Canadian Wheat Board in 1935. The Canadian Wheat Board bought and marketed what we now call organic wheat, durum, oats and barley. The Canadian Grain Commission set and policed the standards of what we now call organic cereal grains in the beginning of the opening up of the West for homesteading, starting in 1912 and obviously added oil seeds and legumes as farmers started to produce them. They continued with the above policies and procedures until pesticides were introduced. Here at Davidson, it was 1948 or 1949.

Whether grain had been sprayed or not was not a concern at the beginning of the chemical era. However, the pesticide testing lab was established in the Grain Research Laboratory, Canadian Grain Commission, in 1966. It has a list of 115 pesticides it tests export or domestic grain for which indicates the concern for pesticide pollution in cereal grain, oil seeds and legumes that are moving into the export and domestic markets.

A few days ago, Tom Nowicki, program manager of the Research Laboratory, told me they had never tested any of the organic grain to date.

The voluntary organic certification organizations do not require or have the facilities to test certified organic grain, oil seeds or legumes that are sold for export or used domestically. Up until now, the markets for certified organic products have not been large, however, the demand for organic food is increasing at the rate of 20 per cent a year, and there are several reasons it will continue to rapidly increase.

### **1. Economic**

I grew up in the Depression of the 1930s. My father before 1935 was selling wheat at 19-29 cents a bushel. If you consider inflation, that is \$2.70-3.15 a bushel in today's prices. Initial price for Grade#1 wheat 13.5 percent protein at the Davidson elevator today is \$2.25 per bushel. (Incidentally, when the Canadian Wheat Board was established, it was a dual marketing system. A floor price was established. It was 52.5 cents per bushel at Davidson or \$7 per bushel in today's values). Certified organic farmers are getting a \$3 per bushel premium today on that \$2.25 wheat, plus final payment. If farmers are going to survive economically, they are going to have to convert to organic.

### **2. Environmental concerns**

Consumers are becoming very concerned about the pesticide pollution in their food and water. Mothers and grandmothers are becoming increasingly concerned about the kind of world their children and grandchildren are growing up in. Some people are concerned about what pesticides are doing to livestock and wildlife and many others are concerned about increasingly concerned about the kind of world their children and grandchildren are growing up in. Some people are concerned about what pesticides are doing to livestock and wildlife and many others are concerned about pesticides destroying the nutrition in their food. Europeans are now stating very firmly that certified organic food is more nutritious than chemically produced food and Europe is where we have some large markets. Pesticide allergies are also on the increase.

### **3. Globalization, Transnational Corporations and GMOs**

The introduction of GMOs has nothing to do with feeding the hungry world. GMOs are being developed so corporations can control the family farm. They also want to introduce GMO terminator seed so farmers will have to buy their seed every year. After 50 years of chemical agriculture, weeds have built up a resistance to herbicides, as a result, stronger plants (canola, wheat, corn, soya beans etc.) are required so the chemical corporations can keep selling their herbicides without killing the farmer's crops. Farmers are becoming aware that if they want to maintain control of their farms they will have to move to organic agriculture and freeze the transnational corporations out of the market place. They are certainly getting the support of major environmental organizations like Green Peace, the Council of Canadians, the Sierra Club and also many consumer groups. Even though production may drop, farmers take home pay (net returns) will increase if they just quit buying pesticides.

**Recommendations**

1. The Canadian Grain Commission should take over the mandatory organic certification of all cereal grains, oil seeds and legumes grown in Canada. If they don't, in five years time when 50 per cent of the above products are produced organically, we would have to have two organizations providing the services the Canadian Grain Commission are providing today-or in 10 years time, when we have wall-to-wall organic production in Canada, the present Canadian Grain Commission would become obsolete.

2. Establish a mandatory organic certification system for all other food products such as beef, pork, poultry, vegetables, fruits, herbs, etc. Remember, we had a very good plant breeding system provided by crop scientists with Agriculture Canada and universities before the Mulroney government passed the Plant Breeders Rights Act in 1991. The Percy Schmeiser appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada on Jan. 20, 2004 has certainly made everyone aware that farmers have lost their rights to save their own seed and the control "patent rights" have over farmers.

3. The Canadian Wheat Board should buy directly all cereal grains and discontinue its buy-back program.

I am prepared to meet with anyone to discuss the above proposal at your earliest convenience.

Elmer Laird

November 22, 2004 Davidson Leader

### **Grain Commission should regulate certified organic grains**

Open letter to Michael Sctewich, Federal Health Protection Branch

Re: Mandatory certification regulations for certified organic products

I was pleased to hear your speech at the Organic Connections Conference at Centennial Auditorium in Saskatoon on Nov. 15. I was also pleased to have a couple of brief conversations with you later. I have two main recommendations on mandatory certification and a number of concerns.

1. The Canadian Grain Commission should be responsible for developing and enforcing the certified organic mandatory regulations for cereal grains, oil seeds and legumes.

2. The Health Protection Branch should be responsible for developing and enforcing the certified organic regulations on all other food products such as fruit, vegetables, meat, dairy, etc

The Canada Grain Commission already has a mandate to test all cereal grains, oil seeds, and legumes but they are not carrying it out. The Wheat Board also has a mandate to market all spring wheat, durum and barley and they're not doing it.

Perhaps a little background information would be useful. I am an Air Force veteran of World War II. I started farming in 1946 with my father as soon as I got home from overseas and farmed until 2001, when I retired as a farmer. However, I am president and manager of the Back To The Farm Research Foundation which was established as a policy research organization in 1973. It was sponsored by Local 614 of the National Farmer's Union. In 2001 we established the first certified organic research foundation in Canada. During my farming career, I joined the Saskatchewan Farmers Union and then in 1969, I joined the National Farmers Union at their founding convention in Winnipeg. I am sorry to bore you with this information, but I want to explain my background in farm organizations and environmental research.

The Canadian Grain Commission was established in 1912. It has an excellent reputation world-wide in helping grain farmers provide quality grains to our customers all over the world. It was the referee or umpire between the grain buyers (or companies) and the farmers in their arguments over grades, weights, protein content, etc. They are the organization the rest of the world depended on to get the grade and quality of grain they ordered from Canada. They also served Canadian buyers well. We must remember that all grain was organic until 1948-1949 when, we started using herbicides and pesticides. However, the Canadian Grain Commission now has a pesticide testing laboratory and has had for well over 20 years. Certain countries will not accept grain that has too high a content of pesticides and herbicides. Most of the developed countries have different standards of the maximum level of herbicide and pesticide levels they will accept. Nov. 15, when I wrote this letter, I phoned Tom Nowieki, head of the Pesticide Testing Lab in the Canadian Grain Commission in Winnipeg and asked him if he had ever tested any certified organic grain for pesticides or herbicides. He says he hasn't to date.

From 1986 to 1992, I was on the Board of Directors of the Canadian Organic Producer Marketing Co-operative, Girvin, Sask. We were shipping organic grain to Europe, United States and Canada and I know the organic grain was never tested for pesticides or herbicides because I graded most of the grain and sealed most of the containers they were shipped in. I haven't heard of any of today's buyers of certified organic grain testing for pesticides or herbicides before they ship the grain. If we are going to supply a quality product to the rest of the world, we have to have creditability and we need an experienced organization to police the grain, oil seed and legume trade. We need to broaden out the responsibility of the Canadian Grain Commission to do it. There isn't any point in having two police forces when one will do. The Canadian Grain Commission has done an excellent job for Canadian farmers for 92 years. I think it will have a great future if we give it a chance. Right now, it is very likely at its lowest ebb of enforcement because of financial cut backs by the Federal government who finances it.

I haven't had any first-hand experience with the Health Protection Branch like I have with the Canada Grain Commission and the Canadian Wheat Board, so I will leave the comments to others.

However, every Saskatchewan Farmers Union or National Farmers Union annual convention ever went to had officials attend as speakers from both the Canadian Grain Commission and the Canadian Wheat Board. They also attended the annual meeting of the Manitoba and Alberta Farmers Union, the Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta Pool elevator conventions and the United Grain Growers conventions. So yearly, all the marketing problems were aired and many resolved. This practice is what has developed the two organizations to where they are today. I think they both serve conventional (chemical farmers) interests quite well and I think they would do the same for certified organic farmers if we give them the opportunity.

I was pleased to hear that you own a farm in Saskatchewan and have had some experience here. I don't know the name of your superiors, but I trust you will pass this message along at your earliest convenience.

Elmer Laird, president Back To The Farm  
Research Foundation

December 20, 2004 Davidson Leader

### **Organic Regulatory Committee should work with CGC**

Open letter to:

People involved in Mandatory Organic Certification attending Organic Connections Conference, Nov. 14- 16, 2004 in Saskatoon

Ms. Debbie Miller, president, OCIA International; Mr. Arnold Taylor, president Saskatchewan Organic Directorate; Ms. Janine Gibson, president COG; chair Canadian Committee of Independent Organic Inspectors Association and member of Organic Regulatory Committee; Mr. Gary Briggs, senior communications officer, Canadian Food Inspection Agency; Ms. Jodi Robinson, International Trade Canada (not at conference) and people attending National Farmers Union 35th Annual Convention Nov. 18-20, 2004 directly elected or appointed to positions in the Canadian Grain Marketing System; Albert Schatzke, Canadian Grain Commission, Winnipeg; Larry Hill, CWB, District 3, speaker at NFU Convention, Swift Current; Arthur Macklin, CWB Director, Grande Prairie, Alberta; and Wilfred (Butch) Harder, CWB Director, Headingly, Manitoba

RE: Mandatory Certification of all organic foods produced in Canada

Recommendations:

The Canadian Grain Commission that was established in 1912 presently has a mandate to establish standards and regulate the testing or grading of all cereal grains, oilseeds and legumes marketed in Canada or overseas. This includes pesticide testing. They are known as the police force of the grain trade. It is their responsibility to make sure that both producers and buyers and services supplied by anyone in the middle gets a fair deal when buying or marketing.

I am recommending that the Organic Regulatory Committee work with the CGC to work out a system to certify all organic cereal grains, oilseeds and legumes marketed in Canada and for export.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency is responsible for testing all other foods — fruits, vegetables, meat, milk, etc. coming into Canada or produced and sold in Canada. I recommend that the Organic Regulatory Committee work with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to develop and operate mandatory organic certification standards or regulations for all food products marketed in Canada or exported other than cereal grains, oilseeds and legumes.

Reason #1 - It is impossible to have two speed limits and two enforcement agencies operating or controlling the speed limit on a single highway. If we don't involve the CGC in mandatory organic certification, I think we would have to ask Parliament to amend the CGC Act to share the highway. The same applies to CFIA.

Reason #2 - I don't know the financial details of the operations of the cost of operating the CGC or the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. However, I am sure the Canadian taxpayer contributes to the cost of the two government agencies. There isn't

any reason in my opinion why organic producers should pay more for the services the two agencies supply them than do conventional (chemical) producers. These services are very necessary for both our Canadian and overseas customers whether organic or conventional.

Reason #3 - I talked to the people listed on the left hand side of our letterhead during the two days I attended the Organic Connections conference on Nov. 12 and 13. When I was home I phoned Tom Nowieki, Head of Pesticide Testing Laboratory of the Canadian Grain Commission in Winnipeg on Nov. 17. I asked him how many samples of organic grain he has tested and he said, "None." I shipped my first organic grain to Ontario in 1976, and I wasn't the first shipper so apparently no Canadian grown organic grain has been tested by the pesticide testing lab in the last 28 years.

Reason #4 - A few days ago I phoned Enviro-Test Labs in Edmonton to find out the cost of testing grain. Here at Davidson we had four cases of infant cancer three years ago. We decided to test the Davidson water supply. We interviewed the three businesses in Davidson which were selling pesticides. There were a total of 64 kinds of pesticides marketed here at that time. Some pesticides have the same active ingredients so our 64 pesticides had 45 active ingredients. Davidson's water supply comes from three sources. We had Enviro-Test Labs, Edmonton, test the three samples each for 45 active ingredients. It cost \$2,700 per test or \$8,100 for the three. The Edmonton lab told me it was more work testing grain samples than water samples and so it would cost more. I doubt if any organic farmer wants to get involved in paying for pesticide tests individually while at the same time he is paying as a taxpayer for the cost of the CGC Laboratory.

The National Farmers Union convention had both CGC and CWB information booths. I discussed my recommendation #1 with Messer's Schatzke, Hill, Macklin and Harder following my announcement at the NFU convention. I had the opportunity to report to the convention that the pesticide lab of the CGC had not tested any organic cereal grains, oilseeds, or legumes to date. The CWB, which was set up in 1935, has a mandate to market all spring wheat, durum and barley (earlier oats were included) but they have been doing the buy-back on organic grains since about 1974-75. This is not direct marketing.

Perhaps a little background information would be useful. I am an Air Force veteran of World War II. I started farming in 1946 with my father as soon as I got home from overseas. Our farm was horse powered until 1946 when we made the transition to tractor power. I farmed until 2001 when I retired as a farmer. However, I am president and manager of The Back To The Farm Research Foundation, which was established as a policy research organization in 1973. It was sponsored by Local 614 of the National Farmers Union. In 2001 we established the first certified organic research and demonstration farm in Canada. During my farming career, I joined the Saskatchewan Farmers Union in 1950. I became a director in 1952 and served 10 years. In 1969 I joined the National Farmers Union at their founding convention in Winnipeg and have been a member ever since. I am sorry to bore you with this information, but I want to explain my background of 54 years in farm organizations and environmental research.

The CGC and the CWB has had a close association with farm organization. Every annual meeting of the SFU or NFU I attended had speakers from both the CGC and the CWB just the same as the NFU's 35th convention this November. Every year any



marketing or grading problems were brought to the attention of both organizations and very often solved. Speakers from both the CGC and CWB also attended annual meetings of the Wheat Pool and UGG organizations in all three prairie provinces.

The CGC was established in 1912. It has an excellent reputation worldwide in helping grain farmers provide quality grains to our customers all over the world. It was the referee or umpire between the grain buyers (companies) and the farmers in their arguments over grades, weights, protein content, etc. They are the organization the rest of the world depended on to get the grade and quality of grain they ordered from Canada. They also served Canadian buyers well. We must remember that all grain was organic until 1948-1949 when we started using herbicides and pesticides. However, the CGC now has a pesticide testing laboratory and has had it for well over 20 years. Certain countries will not accept grain that has too high a content of pesticides and herbicides. Most of the developed countries have different standards of the maximum level of herbicides and pesticides that they will accept.

In 1983 our Research Foundation sponsored the Canadian Organic Producers Marketing Co-operative Ltd. (the first in Canada) which established a processing and shipping plant at Girvin, Sask. From 1986 to 1992 I was on the board of directors. We shipped organic grain to Europe, United States and Canada. I know the organic grain we shipped was never tested for pesticides or herbicides because I graded most of the grain and sealed most of the containers that were shipped out. I haven't heard of any of today's marketers of organic grain testing for pesticides or herbicides before they ship the grain.

If we are going to supply a quality product to the rest of the world, we have to have credibility, and we need an experienced organization to police the cereal grain, oilseed and legume trade. We need to broaden out the responsibility of the CGC to do it. There isn't any point in having two police forces when one will do. The CGC has done an excellent job for Canadian farmers for 92 years. I think it will have a great future if we give it a chance. Right now it is very likely at its lowest ebb of enforcement because of financial cutbacks by the federal government who finances it. We need to demand more financial support for the CGC.

I have not had any firsthand experience with the Health Protection Branch like I have had with the CGC and CWB so I will leave the comments to others.

My final recommendation is - the CGC and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency should each hold about a two- day workshop in their respective headquarters for all the people who are or will be involved in developing Mandatory National Organic Certification Standards. They then will have a better understanding of services provided by the two organizations.

Elmer Laird, president  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

October 2, 2006 Davidson Leader

Both the Canadian Organic Producers and the Ottawa establishment were shockingly surprised recently when Canadian organic producers received National Mandatory Certification regulations for organic producers. Farmers have been trying to convince the Ottawa establishment for many years that they need mandatory government organic certification standards or regulations. However, the chemical lobby has been very powerful and Ottawa wouldn't budge. Myself and many other farmers have been certified under the United States Department of Agriculture for several years to market to the United States and also a German certification agency to market to Europe. I don't know the exact date but Europe recently lowered the boom. They told the Canadian government that if they didn't provide mandatory certification standards for Canadian organic farmers they wouldn't accept any more Canadian organic products into Europe. The Federal Government quickly decided to honour the request and decided the Canadian Food Inspection agency should carry out the mandate. The following news release was issued by Health Canada on September 15, 2006.

Proposed organic products regulations aim to protect consumers from false organic claims.

Ottawa, September 7, 2006 - The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) is proposing regulations to govern the use of a federal organic logo and include certification requirements for organic agricultural products.

The proposed *Organic Products Regulations* were published for public comment on September 2, 2006 in *Canada Gazette*, Part 1. A 75-day comment period ending on November 16, 2006 will give the public and stakeholders the opportunity to review the proposed regulations and provide the CFIA with written comments.

The regulations aim to protect consumers against deceptive and misleading labelling practices and set out requirements for organic products in inter-provincial and international trade. The "Canada Organic" logo, if adopted, would be permitted for use only on those food products certified as meeting the newly revised Canadian standard for organic production.

The anticipated federal regulatory program for organic products will build upon existing standards and certification systems and will contribute to the organic industry's capacity to respond to international and domestic market opportunities.

A comprehensive national consultation process was undertaken with stakeholders and provincial and territorial partners from 2003 through 2005. The proposed Organic Products Regulations capture the key concepts for the federal regulatory program that attained a wide-scale stakeholder agreement leading to publication of the proposed regulations for public comment.

The proposed regulations may be obtained on the CFIA's Website at [www.inspection.gc.ca](http://www.inspection.gc.ca) or the Canada Gazette Website at [www.canadagazette.gc.ca](http://www.canadagazette.gc.ca)

Comments on the proposed regulations must be provided in writing to: Dr. Bashir Manji, Canadian Food Inspection Agency, 59 Camelot Drive, Ottawa, ON, Canada K1Y 0Y9

The revised Canadian organic standards, *Organic Production Systems - General Principles and Management Standards and the Permitted Substances Lists* are

available through the Canadian General Standards Board:

[http://www.tpsgcpwgsc.gc.ca/cgsb/on\\_the\\_net/organic/indexe.html](http://www.tpsgcpwgsc.gc.ca/cgsb/on_the_net/organic/indexe.html)

CFIA Media Relations: Ottawa (613) 228-6682

I have left Dr. Bashir Manji's full mailing address so anyone can respond, food is an all citizens' issue or concern.

Open letter to: Dr. Bashir Manji, Canadian Food Inspection Agency  
 Dr. Lon Borgerson, Provincial Secretary of Organic Agriculture  
 Mr. Arnold Taylor, Past President of the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate  
 Mr. Terry Pugh, Executive Secretary of the National Farmers' Union

Gentlemen:

The Board of Directors of The Back to the Farm Research Foundation met on Tuesday evening, September 26, 2006 to discuss the Mandatory Certification Proposal. They had all previously received copies of the 14 page draft of the "Organic Product Regulations" published in the Canada Gazette by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. We are pleased with the decision to proceed with Mandatory Certification of organic farms however, we have four recommendations.

1. Our governments should pay the farm organic certification fees out of taxpayers dollars. We hear by the grapevine that at least ten states in the United States are paying farmers' certification fees to help promote organic production.

2. Recognize the importance of the audit trail from producer to consumer. It is good to have a Certification Logo. However, to have mandatory certification work successfully the consumer must be able to find out where the certified organic food he is buying was produced and who trucked it or milled it, etc. This is the only way the system can be policed. The consumer must be able to check the source.

3. Health Protection Branch must do an educational program explaining the Audit Trail. They are the organization that is responsible for the mandatory certification and must be responsible for informing the consumer about the audit trail.

4. Dogs must be trained to check for chemical residues in all organic food products. Presently container loads of grain, oil seeds and legumes are going overseas without checking the contents for chemical residues. The Canada Grain Commission normally checks grain for chemical residues.

The Canadian Grain Commission have a pesticide testing lab in Winnipeg. However, the chief commissioner says that it would cost ten thousand dollars to check one overseas container and they can't afford to do that.

Twenty years ago when we had the Canadian Organic Producers Marketing Co-operative Limited at Girvin, Sask., we checked with the RCMP dog trainer at RCMP headquarters in Regina to see if they could train dogs to check for chemical residues. He assured me they could: Presently, dogs are trained to follow the scent of people, marijuana and many other things. I am sure they could be very useful and inexpensive in a centre where large volumes of certified organic food is handled. They say that dogs are man's best friend. They have helped us many times in the past. I think it is time to ask them to help enforce the mandate for Mandatory National Certification of organic foods.

Elmer Laird, President Back to the Farm Research Foundation

# **CERTIFIED ORGANIC INSPECTIONS**

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April 2000 *alive* #210

## **Organic Certification**

Organic farmers need the help of food consumers to make the national organic certification program work. The consumer must challenge the quality of certified organic products to give them credibility. At last count, there were 47 certification organizations across Canada. Now there is a national program and all the standards of the other volunteer programs will have to meet or exceed it.

In organic production, we can audit the trail from producer to customer. I am certified organic by the Canadian Organic Certification Cooperative Ltd. My membership certification number is 0017. That number and the "lot" number will be marked on every bag of my product wherever it goes in North America. If you bought my radish seed in a health food store in Dallas, Texas, or St John's, Newfoundland, that number should be on the container or the operators of the stores must be able to provide the number. The product can then be traced back to my farm where the radish is produced. If it were bread, my number would be on the bread wrapper. I know my own production best so I will use my radish crop as an example.

I harvested my radish seed last fall (1999). It is presently stored in a granary certified as organically safe storage. I was fortunate to get a spell of dry, windy weather while harvesting. Ten per cent is the highest moisture content allowable. The moisture content in my radish seed was 6.3 per cent.

Shortly after harvesting the radish seed, I sent a sample to Mumm's Sprouting Seeds Ltd in Shellbrook, Saskatchewan, for testing. Mumm's markets 30 kinds of certified organic sprouting seeds all over North America. They send their samples to BDS Laboratories in Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan, to test for E coli and salmonella bacteria. When the report came back, Jim Mumm informed me that the sample did not show any signs of either bacteria. The tests are carried out on the seeds after they are sprouted at the laboratory.

I am presently waiting for a call to send my radish seed to the cleaning plant that Mumm's uses for some of its seeds. The plant is certified for cleaning organic seed. After the radish seed is cleaned, Mumm's takes a sample out of every tenth bag and forwards it to the laboratory for more testing. The seed is not marketed for human food unless it is free of E coli and salmonella. It must pass the test a second time.

Mumm's Sprouting Seeds Ltd is certified organic by Organic Crop Improvement Association (OCIA). The company is also certified by Farm Verified Organic (FVO65) which is recognized by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements.

Jensen's Seed Cleaning Plant—who will clean my radish seed for Mumm's—is certified to clean organic seed by OCIA.

My number is used instead of my name because if there is a complaint, it goes to the certification agency that investigates the complaint with the producer member. People who are certified to handle the product all along the line will be investigated if necessary. I, or anyone else involved in the marketing of my product, could lose organic certification if found at fault.

If *E. coli* or salmonella were found in a half dozen places in North America, Mumm's would be out of business. Jim Mumm says that in all the tests they have done over the years, none has ever contained *E. coli* or salmonella. He is a firm believer in the nutritional value of sprouting seeds. When seeds, beans and grains are sprouted, their nutrients are released. It is a very simple procedure and once you learn how to sprout, it is an inexpensive way to get your "greens" at any time of the year.

The steps I have outlined are similar to the marketing of any certified organic product. However, the final test is made in the stomach of the consumer. That is the reason it is so important that consumers have first-hand knowledge of the organic certification process. Consumers must have input into this process to make it work.

October 2000 *alive* #216

### **On the Road to Organic Certification**

Janine Gibson believes in her work. She is executive secretary of the international Independent Organic Inspectors Association (IOIA), chairperson of the Canadian committee of IOIA and second vice-president of the Canadian Organic Advisory Board, which is a national board that established organic certifications standards for Canada.

She has numerous other positions in the organic movement, including teaching courses in both organic farming and inspection at Assiniboine Community College in Brandon, Manitoba. This is the only college in Canada to offer a correspondence course in organic inspection. Students take the course at home and then spend a couple of days in rural Manitoba being interviewed, eating organic food and touring organic farms. If they pass, they have to serve as apprentices on a number of field trips—three for crops, three for livestock and three for processing—to determine if they qualify as certification inspectors.

I was fortunate enough to have Gibson and two apprentices move into my farm home in Davidson this past June. In effect, they temporarily transferred the apprenticeship training program from Brandon to my home for a week. It gave me the opportunity to have an inside look at organic inspection training.

Every day for that week, my guests travelled to organic farms within a 100-kilometre radius that had applied for certification by the Canadian Organic Certification Co-Operative (Box 2468, Swift Current, SK). Prior to their arrival at an organic farm, the farmer was required to fill out an eight-page questionnaire. The farmer was also required to supply a field map of his farm and the crop(s) growing in each field at the time; a copy of the first page of his/her Canadian Wheat Board permit book to check and verify acreages and crops; a map of the farmyard showing the location of storage bins; and livestock or poultry-feeding facilities and grazing locations in use.

As part of training, the apprentice interviews the farmer and reviews the questionnaire to get a clear understanding of the farm's operations. Janine Gibson makes sure the apprentice inspector covers the whole operation and then evaluates his/her techniques. Everyone inspects the storage bins to make sure they don't leak, are rodent proof and in good repair. Livestock and poultry facilities and all fields are examined.

Some certification organizations require that a chemical-sensitive crop be seeded in a border all around the farmer's property. If toxic chemical sprays drift over from a neighbor, the effects will be obvious in that border strip. Weeds in the field will also show chemical damage and if there is evidence of any chemical drift, that field may be disqualified.

The organic farmer must sign an affidavit, which is witnessed and assures the inspector and certification organization that he/she has accurately reported all information. The inspector then files a report to the certifying organization. A committee examines the

report, any accompanying paperwork and recommends to a board of directors whether or not the applicant should be certified as organic. If the answer is yes, an agreement is mailed to the applicant along with a note of any conditions that need to be addressed to meet the standards. The farmer must also keep a record of all sales of certified organic products, which the certification organization may examine at any time during the year.

Janine Gibson started organic certification inspections in 1993. Since that time, she has inspected more than 850 farms in Canada and the United States. She makes it very clear that "third party" independent inspectors only make recommendations. They don't certify; only the certification organization does that.

During the week Gibson and students stayed with me, they visited two farms a day. I sat in on the discussions every evening following their inspections. Gibson taught not only how to inspect farms, but also how organic production relates to the quality of the food we eat. Nutrition, soil building and fertility are always uppermost in her mind.

July 3, 2000 Davidson Leader

On the morning of June 24, Janine Gibson, of Steinbach, Man., instructor of organic farming and organic certification programs at Assiniboine Community College, Brandon and apprentice Jack Reams, Chilliwack, B.C., left to inspect the DeMong farms at Cudworth. Dandelion growers in the district will be interested to know that Gibson left a small jar of dandelion jelly and a thank you note for hosting the program for a week. The recipe on top of the jar says, “dandelion juice, sugar, lemon juice, and pectin.” I thought it was a valuable product with which I could demonstrate to everyone that dandelions were good for other things besides making dandelion wine and worrying about their esthetic appearance on lawns. I decided not to use the jelly but have been assured by Gibson since that more is available until local dandelion growers get in the business.

In effect, the organic certification inspectors training program had been temporarily transferred from Brandon Community College to my farm home for a week of on- the-job training, computers and all. I was fortunate to have an inside look at the inspection program in action. Gibson and two trainees left my home every morning and inspected two organic farms in a 60-70-mile radius of Davidson every day. Finally, on Friday morning Dennis Brodner of Cupar inspected my farm and chicken operation. Brodner sat at the kitchen table and under the watchful eye of Gibson reviewed field numbers and crops and the questionnaire I had previously filled out on my farming operations for last year.

Apprentices Jack Reams and Duane Phillippi, of Regina listened to the interview. Then we all went out and inspected my brooder houses, my chicken feed, my source of water, asked for the name of the hatchery, looked at my feed storage and inspected my grain storage bins and marketing records, then we went to inspect the fields. This is the procedure that had been going on all week on other farms. Gibson had two apprentices with her every day but Friday when she had three.

I sat in on the discussions every morning and evening. Gibson not only teaches how to inspect organic farms, but also relates organic production to good nutrition. Nutrition (which Gibson studied at university) is always uppermost in her mind when she is involved in a discussion on organic farming.

Apprentices during the week were Maria Scholten, Saskatoon, who has a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture. She works at the horticulture department at the University of Saskatchewan. Duane Phillippi is president of the Hemp Growers Association of Saskatchewan. He was a good salad maker and explained the nutritional qualities of hemp seed and hemp seed oil as he added them to the salads he made for supper. Wendy Clark, Brandon, has worked for Manitoba Telephones for 13 years as a telephone operator.

She drove all the way from Brandon in the rain on Monday evening to serve her apprenticeship. Jack Reams, Chilliwack, flew out for the week to complete his apprenticeship. He worked out of Saskatoon for a few days with agriculture consultant Gary Storey and then came to Davidson to work with Gibson. He was going home for the weekend and then going to Alberta on June 27 where he had a six—week contract to inspect organic farms. Dennis Brodner, Cupar, started farming in 1974 and has always



farmed organic. Brodner was a member of the Canadian Organic Certification Co-operative Limited, Girvin before it went bankrupt.

In this world where we have maximum use of agriculture herbicides and pesticides nothing is completely chemical free. However, it means that certified organic producers are using every means possible to produce food that has a minimum of pesticide residues. Examples of this would be:

1) If run-off water from an adjoining field that has been sprayed with chemicals runs into an organic farmer's slough it will not be certified organic. The slough hay will not be cut or if it is, it will be sold to producers who are not organic.

2) All Certification organizations require a border strip around an organic farmer's farm to be seeded to a chemical sensitive crop. If spray drifts from a farmer's field the inspector will be able to tell by the border strip if the toxic chemical had drifted over from the neighbour's spraying operations.

3) An inspector can also examine weeds in the crop to see if there has been spray drift, etc.

The certified organic foods inspection system is the most effective testing system in Canada for pesticide residues. A record is kept from where the food is produced in the farmer's fields, through processors to the consumer's table. No other system in Canada gives this type of protection.

The final test of any food is in the stomach of the person who eats it. The food carries the producer's certification number. If there are any complaints, the buyer or user of the food can report the complaint to the certification agency or organization who will check with their producer member. If the complaint is valid the producer can lose their certification.

The Canadian Organic Advisory Board (COAB), of which Gibson is second vice-president, is a producer board that sets National Standards. All of the 47 certification organization standards must meet or exceed COAB standards. Saskatchewan has 10 organizations, Alberta has four and Manitoba has two.

The certification inspectors forward a report to the certification organization that you are a member of and that organization has a certification committee which may or may not recommend that you should be certified. Assiniboine Community College is the only place in Canada that trains organic certification inspectors. With the rapid movement to organic farming its resources will be severely taxed in the future to supply the number needed.

February 14, 2000 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:

Dr. Robert McDonald, Executive Director Canadian Organic Advisory Board Inc.

Re: Future Challenges in the Organic Industry.

Dear Mr. McDonald,

We need to train many more inspectors to service the farms that are rapidly being moved into organic production.

Farmers who are certified organic are all certified by what we call third party certification. The farmer has to pay for the service provided by the organic inspector. However, the inspector is contracted by a certification organization that is not obligated or tied in any financial way to either the farmer who produces certified organic products or the individual or company that markets them. It's the same principle as the umpire at a ball game. In addition we have an audit trail. The audit trail means we can trace the food back to the farmer who produced it. The inspector does not make the decision determining whether or not the farmer should be certified organic. He or she does the farm inspection and files the report with the organization that has contracted him/her to do the work. The certification committee of the contracting organization makes the final decision. For example, I belong to the Canadian Organic Certification Co-operative Ltd. In the last number of years my farm has been inspected alternatively by Ms. Janine Gibson of Steinbach, Man. and Ms. Sandra Conway of Gardenton, Man. They inspect the farm and turn their reports and recommendations over to the certification co-op to make the final decision. Gibson is an accredited inspector of the independent organic inspectors association which means she is qualified to inspect organic farms in North America. She also teaches a course in organic certification at Assiniboine Community College. She has a degree in psychology from the University of Winnipeg and has studied nutrition. She worked for the Childrens Home of Winnipeg helping women with family management. Conway has a degree in sociology and operates a certified organic market garden at Gardenton sixty miles south of Winnipeg.

In the 1930's when I grew up we never heard of the Federal Health Protection Branch, nor did we rely on them to decide what food was safe to eat. My mother, grandmother and the neighbor women in the community made those decisions. Gibson is a mother and Conway is a grandmother. Those are very important qualifications for people who determine the safety of food. Both have farm backgrounds. A farm background is necessary for anyone wishing to become an inspector. Gibson describes the structure and objectives of the Independent Organic Inspectors Association as follows:

IOIA members believe that supporting sustainable agriculture benefits people everywhere environmentally, socially and economically: Last year we held inspector trainings in California, British Columbia, Argentina, Manitoba, Japan, Mexico and Michigan. Please visit our website at [www.ioia.net](http://www.ioia.net) for information on our ongoing inspector trainings, as inspectors continue to be in demand. Our coordinating office is in Broadus, Montana, 59317-0006 U.S.A., though we are an international organization founded in 1991. We provide a networking role for inspectors in various regions through our newsletter, the inspectors report and our contact people serving on our various committees. We also publish a yearly membership directory that lists the experience and

contact information for our 245 members in 18 countries. Our mission is to provide the organic industry with trained and qualified inspectors, to promote consistency in the inspection process and to address issues and concerns relevant to!

We consider organic inspection to be a vital link in the growing local and global organic culture. Our membership structure includes: supporting memberships for individuals, businesses, organizations and certification agencies who support our goals and choose to help facilitate trainings; accredited inspectors, non-accredited inspector members and apprentice inspectors. IOIA goals include promoting consistency in the inspection process, developing and coordinating effective and comprehensive inspector training, implementing a rigorous accreditation program, providing inspectors with a voice in establishing policies and working conditions, encouraging reciprocity between various organic certification agencies and providing inspectors with better field techniques and uniform report forms. What we do to meet these goals starts with adhering to the IOIA Code certification! We develop inspector training curriculum, resource materials and policy proposals. Our training coordinators conduct regional training programs and participate in organic trade fairs and conferences. We all strive to share our unique perspectives from the leading edges of the organic movement.

In the last couple of years we have heard about all the confusion and keys in the Health Protection Branch with mass resignations. It appears the organic certification programs are the only food inspection program that has creditability at this time.

Elmer Laird, President  
Back to the Farm Research Foundation

October 21, 2002 Davidson Leader

### **Looking into different methods of testing for pesticides**

Open letter to:  
Ms. Janine Gibson  
Head of the International Organic Inspectors Assoc.

I would like to respond to an article in the Aug. 29, 2002, edition of the Western Producer by journalist Sean Pratt entitled "Organic Inspectors Slam System". The article quotes Mischa Popoff, a Manitoba based inspector and Duane Phillipi, a Regina based inspector. They say "People who are charged with policing Canada's organic industry say the system is deeply flawed". Popoff is suggesting in the article adding a system that employs random, surprise audits and sampling of plants to test for chemical residues.

I would agree with Mr. Popoff if the provincial or federal governments would pay the laboratory testing cost.

However, both federal and provincial governments have policies to support chemical agriculture only and don't want taxpaying consumers to know about chemical residues in the food and if organic farmers grains and oil seeds were tested the same service would have to be provided for all food products. In fact export grain is tested for pesticides before it leaves Canada.

The Canada Grain Commission have a pesticide testing laboratory in their office in Winnipeg. When I visited the "lab" in 1985 Mr. Tom Nowicki who is in charge of the lab showed me a list of acceptable tolerances of pesticides importing countries would permit in the grain and oil seeds they purchased from Canada. He told me last week that all grain going into Canadian mills is tested for pesticide tolerances. The question is, if you take random tests what pesticides are you going to test for?

In the fall of 2001 our research foundation tested local water supplies because we had four cases of infant cancer here at Davidson. We found out there was 64 different pesticides sold at Davidson. We tested the water for all 64 and it cost \$2,700 per test. The big question if you test, which chemicals do you test for? The wind blows and the water runs, and what pesticide do you hope to find.

The second question is, who will pay the bill?

We have to rely on what we call in the organic certification community a system we call the audit trail. If the regulations of the audit trail are carried out, and this depends on the consumer as much as the producer the system will work effectively, E.g., I was certified with the Canadian Organic Certification Co-operative Ltd. and my certification number was 17 If my wheat goes to a miller it must be labelled #17. Then when the baker bakes it he should have the number 17 stamped on every loaf or he should have a record of where the wheat in that bread is produced. Then if there is a complaint the baker can notify the certification agency and it is their responsibility to check up on me, the producer, the flour miller and the baker to see if any of us have mixed uncertified, polluted grain or flour in the bread. Many people are not aware that the cleaning plant that cleans the grain, the flour miller, the baker and the retailer all must be certified organic and understand the system to market it safely.

This is where the protection in the system really is, knowing how it works.

Many people who buy certified organic food have chemical allergies. It doesn't take them very long to detect there is something wrong with the product on the shelf. So the individuals protection against chemical pollution of certified organic food depends on public understanding of how the audit trail works. Even if you don't have any concerns don't hesitate to ask the question, who certified and produced this product?

There is another method of testing. It is by using dogs. The federal customs officers use dogs at ports of entry all the time to sniff out prohibited substances. When we were operating the Canadian Organic Producers Marketing Co-operative Ltd. at Girvin a few years ago I asked the RCMP dog trainer in Regina if he could train dogs to sniff out or test for chemical residues in certified organic foods. He said "Certainly, however, it will cost \$25,000 dollars to train the dog". That was over ten years ago. In addition he said, "You will have to train someone to look after the dog and record the work the dog is doing." If our governments were concerned about supplying food free of chemical pollution there are many ways to check it without going to the high cost of laboratory testing.

Elmer Laird, President  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

# BACK TO THE FARM RESEARCH FOUNDATION

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May 2002 *alive* #235

## **First Canadian Agricultural Research Farm Receives Organic Certification**

The organic research and demonstration farm operated by the Back to the Farm Research Foundation at Davidson, Sask. is the first agricultural research farm or station in Canada to receive organic certification. We received our organic certification certificate on Jan. 8, 2002 from the Canadian Organic Certification Co-Operative based at Swift Current, Sask.

On March 6, 2001, after 55 years of farming, the last 32 years as organic, I retired and rented my farm to the Back to the Farm Research Foundation for the annual property taxes. I continue to reside in the house and have access to the garden. The research foundation has access to all of the farmland and the farm buildings. Almost 600 acres of the 640-acre farm have been seeded to alfalfa and timothy hay with some Russian rye grass. Thirty-five acres are cultivated. Unfortunately, in 2001, we experienced a severe drought in the western part of Saskatchewan and no test plots were seeded.

## **Central Location**

The farm is in a good location for a certified organic research and demonstration farm. It borders the four-lane Highway #11, five kilometres (three miles) south of Davidson, the midway town between Saskatchewan's two major cities, Regina and Saskatoon. It is also on a direct route from Florida to Alaska.

The Back to the Farm Research Foundation was sponsored by Local 614 of the National Farmers Union on Nov. 27, 1973. It is chartered as a non-profit organization and can issue receipts for charitable donations. We have been financed on charitable donations for the last 28 years.

Our main programs have been working in the policy areas of health, agriculture and the environment. In 1983 we sponsored the Canadian Organic Producers Marketing Co-operative Limited. It was the first organic marketing co-op in Canada. We set up a cleaning and processing plant at Girvin, Sask., and marketed certified organic cereal grains, oilseeds and legumes to the United States, European and Canadian markets. Unfortunately, we went bankrupt in 1992. In December 1991, while in Ottawa making a presentation to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture, I tried to sell organic products to the head chef of the House of Commons, Rhonda Warle, but no luck. The present head chef, Jud Simpson, told me a few days ago that they have had certified organic food on their menu since September 2001.

## **Future Projects**

The organic and demonstration farm now has three main objectives or projects. We hope to do research on intercropping, or what is sometimes called the science of allelopathy. It means growing two or more crops in the same field at the same time for the purpose of controlling weeds and pests or for soil improvement.

Pesticides were designed for biological warfare during the First and Second World Wars. They were created to kill people or vegetation and were never intended for agricultural purposes. It was reported in the *Western Producer* last spring that 22 weeds in Canada are now resistant to herbicides.

As soon as we can afford it, we will start raising certified organic poultry and livestock under the healthiest conditions possible without growth hormones and antibiotics. This will demonstrate how it can be done as nature planned it, and as it was done prior to the introduction of pesticides, growth hormones and antibiotics in the early 1940s.

### **Public Education**

We will establish an information centre in a building built out of straw bales, solar-heated or heated with a heat pump and a small greenhouse for research and demonstration purposes. My wife, who was a librarian, died in November 1999 and left me a small inheritance. She worked in reference services in the Saskatchewan Provincial Library and believed that it was important to provide as much information as possible to all people. We will dedicate the information centre to her. The centre will provide information on organic farming and gardening and where to find organic food. It will also display and maybe sell non-perishable organic products. We will have a herb garden for the purpose of demonstrating to visitors the identification, growing methods and purpose of herbs in human, poultry and livestock diets.

Our research foundation has a 12-person board of directors elected from this community to make decisions. Our objectives are to develop self-sufficient, energy efficient communities, to grow the food here on farms and to eliminate the high cost of energy use of food shipped from California and Florida.

### **Slow Progress**

The federal and all provincial governments are still promoting chemical agriculture. However, on July 12, 2001, Agriculture Minister Lyle Vanclief announced the funding of \$845,000 for what is to be known as Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada at Badden, NS. We're still waiting for more information about this program and about whether it will be "certified organic." The Back to the Farm Research Foundation has applied to the Saskatchewan Economic Development branch and Saskatchewan Agriculture for assistance, but it is very slow in coming. We welcome donations made to the Back to the Farm Research Foundation, Box 69, Davidson, SK, S0G 1A0.

May 3, 2004 Davidson Leader

### **Research foundation welcomes research communities**

*This presentation was made in Regina on April 28, 2004 at the Unitarian Centre.*

Mr. Thomas Chase  
Associate Dean of Arts  
University of Regina

Dear Mr. Chase:

Thank you for inviting us to take part in this meeting today to discuss establishing a Research for Communities Unit.

We would certainly support a unit that would link community groups with university researchers who are willing and able to meet these groups' research needs, hopefully for benefit of everyone. We have been working for many years on a very low budget and we believe we would qualify as one of the local groups that needs research assistance. It has been very difficult for organic producers to get government grants when both the federal and provincial governments support chemical agriculture only.

However, as to advising how this unit would work we may not have much to contribute. We have decided that maybe the most useful contribution we can make is to describe our goals and objectives and work with others to figure out how the new Research for Communities Unit would function.

### **Background Information on The Back To The Farm Research Foundation**

The Back To The Farm Research Foundation was chartered under the provisions of The Societies Act, Province of Saskatchewan on November 27, 1973. It was sponsored by local 614 of the National Farmers Union. The main reason for the Foundation was to do environmentally related agriculture research. The mainstream NFU was devoted to chemical farming at that time, and we couldn't get any environmental agricultural policy resolutions through the main convention. (Now 31 years later NFU president Stewart Wells is a certified organic farmer). For many years we did policy research, helped sponsor environmental conferences and sponsored a grasshopper harvester competition in 1975.

In 1983 we sponsored the Canadian Organic Producers Marketing Co-operative Ltd. at Girvin, Sask. It was the first organic marketing co-operative in Canada. It went bankrupt in 1992.

In March of 2001 I retired as a farmer after farming organically for 32 years, and rented my farm to The Back To The Farm Research Foundation for the land taxes. We then established a certified organic research and demonstration farm, again the first one in Canada. The board of directors appointed me as farm manager, and I rent my farm machinery to the Foundation.

At the present time most of the farm of 620 acres is in certified organic alfalfa hay; however, the last two years we have had some grain and oilseed test plots.

Our main test plot objective at this time is to demonstrate "intercropping." Intercropping means growing two or more crops in one field at the same time for the purpose of 1) controlling weeds 2) controlling bugs and 3) improving the soil or 4)



perhaps all three. For example, oats and peas to control weeds, mustard and barley to control flea beetles and bertha army worm, fall rye in a rotation will control wild millet and clover will control wild mustard, etc. There is one other basic reason (and probably the most important) - that is to demonstrate to anyone who wants to make the transition to organic farming that there is a way to produce healthy nutritious food without using pesticides. Organic farmers work with nature; chemical farmers try to control it.

We support the Kyoto agreement, and therefore, we must find ways to reduce the use of fossil fuels. Organic farmers use legumes in their crop rotation for human and livestock food. Legumes supply the soil with free nitrogen from the atmosphere and therefore, don't require large volumes of chemical nitrogen manufactured from natural gas.

The plowdown of clover or green weeds provides phosphorous for our soils and the composting of animal and poultry manure provide additional nutrition.

In addition, we support the use of solar, hydrogen or wind power for farm buildings to reduce the use of energy. We have asked the provincial government to subsidize solar heated greenhouses for farms, urban homes or communities so we can reduce the use of fossil fuels that are used to haul vegetables from California or Florida.

They say we have no money. If we develop the program, we will be creating the jobs here at home rather than in California or Florida.

In February 2003, I went on an organic tour of Cuba with 20 other people. On the tour was a German scientist, Dr. F.M Balzer. In an hour and a half lecture while on tour, he demonstrated that organically produced food was more nutritious than chemically raised food. (Dr. Balzer's address and location are on an attached page). Chemical farmers on "coffee row" in Davidson agree that organic food would be more nutritious than chemically produced food.

Since early homestead days farmers made most of their crop growing decisions based on visual examination of soil, crops, livestock, poultry, weather, etc.

As a result of our examination of historical procedures, we have formally passed a resolution stating that members of our Research Foundation is practising "eyeball science."

We have studied your questions very carefully, and this is our interpretation of the questions we will be dealing with today. How can social scientists and laboratory scientists help the people who practise eyeball science accomplish their common objectives?

**Our Main Objectives are:**

Survival of the productivity of our soils (chemical farming will eventually destroy them).

Survival of people, domestic animals, wildlife and the environment - pesticides are polluting our food, water and air. We need a system to protect all life from toxic pollutants and provide everyone with a clean environment and the healthiest food that is possible to produce.

The survival of our national health care system needs a foundation of pure air, clean unpolluted water and certified organic nutritious food. Otherwise, it is headed for bankruptcy. See attached United Nations story on worldwide nutrition shortages.

We have developed a Homestead #2 program (attached). In the last 100 years we have made all the mistakes we can afford to make farming. In the next 100 years we will have to find a new approach and we invite you to take part. (see Homestead #2)

Even though we are in the age of globalization, our policy recommends the building or creation of self-sufficient farm communities.

### **Physical Research Requirement**

Research to design a prefab root cellar for urban homes, farm homes and communities to store summer grown vegetables and fruits during the “off” season.

Research for a design for humane, environmentally friendly hog and poultry houses. We support the Beyond Factory Farming program sponsored by the Council of Canadians that opposes factory farming.

We need a research program to plan for the most healthy distribution of animal and poultry producing facilities to avoid creating slum conditions like we have in present day hog and poultry factories. (See the book Secret Ingredients by Stuart Laidlaw. The Brave New World of Industrial Farming published by McLelland & Stewart Ltd). Please note: Saskatchewan has more space for agriculture than any other province.

One of our directors, Charles Moore who spent 10 years in the Okanagan, is convinced we could have a very productive fruit industry here.

Research to find out if all the nutrition in the soil and sea is getting to the consumer’s table.

Research on how we get a biological control registered for controlling grasshoppers.

Start a program to identify safe sources of drinking water in Saskatchewan.

### **Motivational Research**

Research to find out how to convince governments that certified organic food is a fundamental requirement for health and should be served in hospitals, nursing homes, school lunch programs, food banks and in particular for people with special illnesses like cancer.

Research to find ways to inform the public about the “audit trail” provided by the organic certification process. It traces the route the food product has followed from the farm to the retail store. The program won’t work if the consumer doesn’t understand it. I thank you for the opportunity to make this presentation, and we will cooperate with any program that might be developed in the Research for Communities Unit.

Elmer Laird, president Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

May 1, 2006 Davidson Leader

### **Time to talk farm and community policy is overdue**

The Back To The Farm Research Foundation was incorporated under the Societies Act of the Province of Saskatchewan on Nov. 27, 1973. It was sponsored by local 614 of the National Farmers Union (Local 614 covered the geographic areas of Outlook, Kenaston and Davidson or precisely six rural municipalities and the villages and towns in that area). It was incorporated because we couldn't get any environmental issues on the N.F.U. convention floor at the Winnipeg national conventions. At an earlier convention we met British sociologist James McCrobie from London who was a speaker at the Winnipeg N.F.U. convention. We asked him what to do. His reply was, "Why don't you set up your own research foundation?". He was a member of the "Club of Rome". The Club of Rome published the first book on the agricultural environment. We thought then that all S.F.U. locals in the province would establish research foundations. Most of our time in the early years was spent on agriculture or farm policy research. In 1975 we sponsored a grasshopper harvester competition. In 1983 we sponsored the Canadian Organic Producers Marketing Co-operative Limited. It operated a certified organic cleaning, milling and marketing plant in the Girvin school from 1985 until early 1992 when it went bankrupt.

In 2001 I retired as a farmer and rented my farm to the Back To the Farm Research Foundation and was appointed manager. We are now doing some crop research as well as policy research. We have updated our research program as we move into the second century of farming in Saskatchewan. Following are our policies and objectives for the second century of agriculture in Saskatchewan.

#### **Homestead Number Two**

##### **- Saskatchewan Second Century -2005 Farm Policies and Objectives.**

1. To produce the most nutritious, unpolluted food possible for humans, livestock and poultry consumption.
2. To demonstrate humane, open range, healthy methods of livestock and poultry production.
3. To assist people to find sources of healthy, nutritious, certified organic food.
4. To promote self-sufficient farms, communities, provinces and nations.
5. To find ways to get farmers back on the land.
6. To promote co-operation between farm and urban residents.
7. To promote and develop farm training programs for young people.
8. To meet or exceed the minimum standards of food production of the Canadian Organic Certification Co-operative Ltd., the Canadian Organic Advisory Board and the International Standards Organization.
9. To promote energy efficiency using methods such as wind power, solar heat, straw bale housing, etc.
10. To provide an opportunity for food bank production.
11. To introduce nosema locustae, a biological control for grasshoppers.
12. All cereal grains, oilseeds and legumes must be cleaned to export standards before they leave the community. Screenings should be used for poultry, hog, sheep and goat production.

**New Demands:**

1. Canada must rescind the Plant Breeders Rights Act for farmers' protection.
2. Canada must ban terminator seeds and genetically modified seeds to protect consumers' nutrition.
3. Canada must ban growth hormones and antibiotics in livestock and poultry production.
4. Canada must ban the use of carbon monoxide in beef preservation.
5. Canada must protect farmers' rights to save their own seed.
6. Canada must ban hog factory pork production.
7. Federal government must subsidize farmers to go organic.

**Soil Conservation:**

1. To promote good soil and water conservation practices.
2. To measure rhizobial action and nitrogen fixation of legumes.
3. To measure soil bacteria.
4. To promote the use of biological controls for weeds and pests.
5. To demonstrate and promote composting of poultry, animal and human waste.
6. To keep accurate research records and measure soil nutrients and food nutrition in human, animal and poultry feed (grains, oilseeds, legumes and weeds).
7. To introduce organic fertilizers to organic farming.
8. To do research and demonstration of intercropping.
9. To publicize all results from all sources of research done on organic farms.

**Water Research:**

1. To check all water for pesticides, pollutants, etc. Dr. Allan Cessna of the National Hydrology Water institute, Saskatoon reports that all surface water and one third of deep wells in Saskatchewan are polluted with herbicides. Programs must be started immediately to find safe, unpolluted water for all Saskatchewan citizens.
2. To check water tables and train well witchers.

**Research Design Hopefully Subsidized by the Government of Saskatchewan**

1. To research and design a prefab root cellar for farms, rural and urban communities.
2. To encourage and promote solar-heated straw bale greenhouses.

**Psychological, Medical and Practical Reasons to Support Homestead Number Two**

Hippocrates, the Father of Medicine, (between 460 and 380 B.C.) said, "Let your food be your medicine and your medicine be your food". We have been trying for several years to convince Premier Calvert and the government that they should be serving certified organic food in Saskatchewan hospitals, nursing homes, school lunch programs, to food bank recipients, pregnant women and new mothers, restaurants, colleges of agriculture, medicine, etc. We need your help to convince the government. This is the road to health.

We would like to invite community organizations or individuals to discuss farm individuals to discuss farm policy at their convenience. When I moved to Davidson and started farming in 1947, I didn't spend much time in the community for the first couple years. However, there was a lot of policy discussed. By the early 1950s the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool and the Saskatchewan Farmers' Union held a meeting every month, the

United Grain Growers sometimes held a meeting and an annual municipal rate payers meeting was held. All these organizations discussed farm policy at their meetings. I think discussions on farm and community policies are long overdue and I think if we are going to have an active community again we should give it some priority.

Elmer Laird, President Back To The Farm  
Research Foundation

## II. CONVENTIONAL AGRICULTURE AND THE FARM CRISIS



Elmer Laird, who conceived the idea which may evolve into a garden project that produces 200 tonnes of vegetables for the Food Banks in Regina and Saskatoon, is pictured planting seed potatoes on the 35 acre field he has donated to the Food Bank Garden Project.

"Everyone is calling it an economic or financial crisis in agriculture. However, it is far more than finances and-for the lack of a better word I will call it a "system crisis". The agriculture system is not working."

--- Elmer Laird, March 2000

*Conventional farming constitutes a long and expensive chain of energy-intensive inputs such as chemical insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), animal growth hormones, antibiotics, and industrial-scale processing. These are almost completely controlled by large transnational corporations (TNCs), which reduces the autonomy of the farmer and compromises democracy since farmers, consumers, and other stakeholders have limited participation in company decisions. Laird highlights the flaws and injustices of the current agri-food system, including health hazards, environmental degradation, and TNC domination.*

*Recent decades have seen livestock production take the form of factory farming, or intensive industrial farming. Consequences of this approach have resulted in Mad Cow Disease, poor animal welfare, and increased health risks. Considerable attention with regards to these issues is given to hog barns in Saskatchewan.*

*Despite the increased production and economic growth promised by support of conventional agriculture, the expressions 'farm crisis' and 'food crisis' are in high circulation. Laird broadens the focus and calls it a 'system crisis.' The unjust agri-food system has permeated the environmental, cultural, and healthy well-being of Saskatchewan. His plan of action for recovery is embodied in sustainable agriculture that includes reclaiming the family farm, organic practices, local production, and food security.*

# CHEMICAL FARMING

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January 17, 2005 Davidson Leader

## **Pesticides need to be eradicated from the environment**

Part 1

OPEN LETTER TO:

Premier Lorne Calvert,  
David Forbes, Minister of Environment  
Lily Stonehouse, Deputy Minister of Environment  
Mark Wartman, Minister of Agriculture  
Yogi Huyghebaert, Sask. Party Environment Critic  
Greg Brkich, Arm River Watrous MLA

Re: Eradicating pesticides from the environment

### **Background**

Pesticides were developed in World Wars I and II for the purpose of biological warfare and should never have been used for agricultural purposes. When we won WWII, thousands of young Canadian and American veterans who returned home felt that they had conquered the enemy, which was true. However, a smart bunch of entrepreneurs convinced us we could use pesticides to control nature. I was one of them. I sprayed for 20 years before I switched to organic farming or non-chemical farming as it was called then in 1969. Now, many people know that you can't control nature. Mother Nature is a powerful old girl and we need her on our side.

Unfortunately, our universities are training graduates only in chemical agriculture. If in the last 50 years our agricultural science had been geared to finding out ways to work with Mother Nature, it would certainly be a different world to live in - a more productive and healthy world.

### **Resistance to Herbicides**

Weeds started to build up a resistance to herbicides almost right from the start. About 15 or 20 years ago, two geneticists, Dr. Naylor and Dr. Jana of the University of Saskatchewan, were out on my farm checking wild oats for herbicide build up. They were comparing them to wild oats on chemical farms. What they reported then was that wild oats were building up a resistance to herbicides, and it wouldn't do any good to change the chemical as the chemical companies claimed at that time. The geneticists said the resistance would just keep growing. Obviously, they were right.

### **Introduction of GMOs**



Finally, Monsanto and some other transnational chemical corporations introduced GMOs. The weeds had built up such a resistance to herbicides that they had to have a stronger plant to stand up to the more powerful herbicides. When I quit spraying in 1969, spraying season lasted only about three weeks in late June or early July. I never used over three ounces of 2,4- D per acre. Now farmers are using 10 to 12 ounces per acre and the spraying season lasts seven months of the year.

### **Pesticides Will Destroy the Productivity of the Soil**

Dr. Wee Chong Tan, a professor in biochemistry at Lester B. Pearson International University at Victoria, B.C., is convinced that if we continue to use pesticides at the increased rate we are using them at, we will destroy the productivity of the soil.

### **Nutritionist Recognizes the Nutritional Value of Certified Organic Food**

However, maybe we are in for change. Leslie Beck is a nutritionist who was interviewed on CTV, Jan. 6, 2005 at 1 p.m. by host Dr. Maria Shapiro. This was the first time ever that I heard a nutritionist talk about the nutritional benefits of certified organic food on any television or radio program. She reported that 55 per cent of Canadians were now eating certified organic food. She also report that \$20 billion was being spent on certified organic food in the United States, Europe and Japan.

Here in Saskatchewan consumer friends are telling me that the certified organic sections or counters in large stores in cities are getting longer. However, here in the Saskatchewan Legislature they haven't heard of it. Saskatchewan MLAs do not recognize the value of organic food. John Nilson, Minister of Health, told me (when I met him by accident in the Legislative restaurant) that he knew what organic food was and sometimes he ate it. I had been looking for the organic section when he came in. There wasn't one. Unfortunately, the Minister of Health apparently does not understand the nutritional value of certified organic food.

### **House of Commons Uses All the Certified Organic Food It Can Find**

On Jan. 10, 2005, I talked to Mr. Judd Simpson, Head Chef, House of Commons, Ottawa. He reported that he serves all the certified organic food he can find, and he buys it from all across Canada. Not only does he serve it in the restaurants of the House of Commons, but also when the government or Senate has banquets. He has at least one organic item on the evening menu every day. The organic items, whether meats, vegetables or desserts, are labelled with a special organic symbol so everyone will know the organic foods they are eating. He encourages organic farmers to blow their whistles to let everyone know what they are doing.

### **Saskatchewan Has the Highest Rate of Breast and Cervical Cancer and Pet Cancer In Canada**

Here in Saskatchewan we have the highest rate of breast and cervical cancer in women and the second highest rate of prostate cancer in Canada. Recently the CBC Radio reported ported that our pets (dogs and cats) have the highest rate of cancer in Canada, and a clinic has been set up at the University of Saskatchewan to treat them. We also use one-third of all pesticides used in the country. I know that pesticides are causing

cancer. Dr. Allan Cessna, National Hydrology Water Institute, Saskatoon, reports that all the surface water and one-third of the deep wells in Saskatchewan are polluted with herbicides. Unfortunately, no one seems concerned about the exposure of livestock and wild life to pesticides or even to humans.

### **Provincial Government Continues to Subsidize Hog Factories**

The provincial government continues to subsidize huge hog factories that have to use antibiotics to keep the hogs alive. They also use growth hormones to increase weight. More and more consumers are becoming concerned about the quality of their food and will reject pork loaded with antibiotics and growth hormones.

### **The Council of Canadians Launches a Seven Province Campaign Against Hog Factories**

The Council of Canadians has launched a campaign against large hog factories in seven provinces. Kathy Holtslander, Saskatoon, is the coordinator of the program. Not only do the hog factories put out junk meat, they also pollute a lot of our water resources. Saskatchewan has lots of space. We have 43 per cent of the cultivated land in Canada to raise healthy hogs, poultry and livestock on as compared to heavily populated countries like Holland, Belgium and Denmark. In the 1930s when I grew up, before we had antibiotics and growth hormones, we raised healthy animals. If we didn't, they would die. Our major concern back then was shortage of feed.

### **Governments Never Recommend Growing as Healthy Animals as Possible**

During the Mad Cow crisis (May 20, 2003) until now, neither the federal or provincial governments ever said, "We raise the healthiest animals we can possibly raise." Mark Purdy, a British researcher, reported in *Acres USA* an American organic newspaper, that pesticides are what caused Mad Cow Disease. He said, "When you paint a cow's back from horns to tail with a pesticide for warble fly control, strong enough to penetrate the skin and get into a cow's bloodstream and the polluted blood flows through the brain, to control warble flies, it will cause BSE or Mad Cow Disease. He also said that it would cause Alzheimer's. Someday we will realize that Mad Cow Disease, Alzheimer's and Chronic Wasting Disease are all caused by pesticides. Mad Cow Disease did one useful thing. It made many consumers aware of food quality and now they are moving to organic food.

### **David Suzuki Exposes Transnational Corporation Control of Universities**

David Suzuki, author, speaker and host of CBC's *Nature of Things*, was guest speaker at the 35th annual National Farmers Union convention in Saskatoon on Nov. 19, 2004 at 2:30 p.m. A story in the Nov. 20 *StarPhoenix* by journalist Lana Haight quoted Suzuki as follows:

University professors, including those at the University of Saskatchewan, are selling their souls to corporate interests and are becoming cheerleaders for the biotechnology industry, says the prominent Canadian scientist.

“Academics receiving grant money from these various industries become defenders of these industries and no longer are capable of looking at the issues from all sides.

It grieves me, therefore, as a geneticist, to have to say that I am appalled in the way that my fellow scientists have rushed to proclaim the enormous economic promise of genetic engineering with- most no serious discussion about the other side, which would be the enormous potential costs.”

Suzuki pointed to professors at the colleges of agriculture at the universities of Saskatchewan and Guelph who were critical of a 1989 Nature of Things program on organic farming. “They said that we were not scientific, that there was an attack on the chemical industry,” said Suzuki in an interview afterward. He maintained universities have sold their souls to the industry.

“They have allowed the private sector in. Their faculty members who have tenure, they are taking private grants so they now have a vested interest in the company that is giving them money. Do you think they will speak freely? If you get a grant from Monsanto (an agricultural biotechnology company), do you think you will speak out and criticize Monsanto? You become like a tobacco industry spokesman, and I don’t think that belongs in the university,” he said.

Suzuki told the crowd that scientists are not adhering to basic scientific principals and that they are drawing false conclusions. “Anybody that comes in and tells you, “We know enough to be able to manage (biotechnology). Don’t worry about it. Trust us,” is either unbelievably uninformed or deliberately lying. We just don’t know,” he said.

Canadians are the guinea pigs in a huge experiment and they don’t even realize it as they unknowingly consume foods that are genetically engineered, according to Suzuki. “We’re not giving informed consent. We’re just being rammed into the experiment without any choice.” Suzuki said he believes benefits of genetic engineering may eventually be found, but the science shouldn’t be used in everyday applications until those benefits are conclusive. “The science of DNA is far too young to think about taking it out and risking the natural world or even adjacent farmers’ fields or own bodies or other species.”

### **Transnational Control of Farms is Accepted by Politicians**

It is very enlightening and informative to hear Suzuki make these remarks. However, what is more enlightening or revealing is that fact that not one federal or provincial politician in Canada or elsewhere denied what Suzuki said. It appears that our politicians at all levels either don’t understand what is going on or they, support it and are just waiting for the transnational corporations to take complete control of farms. It is very obvious now that governments are not going to take any action to clean up the environment or control the transnationals, we will have to do it ourselves.

(Part 2 will be featured in next weeks paper.)

Elmer Laird, President  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

January 24, 2005 Davidson Leader

### **Government needs to realize the value of organic agriculture**

*Continued from the Jan. 17 edition of The Davidson Leader*

### **Farmers Lost Their Rights When the Plant Breeders Rights Act Was Passed**

We had an excellent plant breeding system in Canada until the government of Brian Mulroney passed the Plant Breeders Rights Act in 1991. The policy was promoted by the previous Liberal government. The new act gives transnational corporations the opportunity to move in and control plant breeding. Prior to 1991, Agriculture Canada plant breeders working with plant breeders at universities and consulting with farmers had done an excellent job of plant breeding since the 1930s. We must have it back.

The transnational pesticides and drug companies are not interested in developing plants to meet our environmental or nutritional conditions. Their main and only interest is in selling up pesticides. They are now trying to get the Plant Breeders Rights Act amended so that the corporations will control the seed and farmers will have to buy seed every year and pay royalties.

The only way farmers can regain control of agriculture and plant breeding is to quit buying the pesticide products of the transnationals.

### **Free Nitrogen From Legumes, Conserving Energy and Reduce Global Warming**

Nobody ever mentions that if farmers use legumes in their crop rotations and inoculate the legume seed, they will get free nitrogen from the air. The main legumes available today are alfalfa, clover, lentils, peas and chickpeas. The alfalfa and clover (there are many varieties) are excellent feed for livestock. This will also save all the natural gas that is used to make commercial nitrogen fertilizer. Peas and lentils are very nutritious food for people. Dr. Wee Chong Tan, a biochemist from Lester B. Pearson International University, Victoria, B.C. (whom I mentioned earlier) claims that organic farming reduces global warming. It appears that it is a win-win-win method of farming and a profitable one as well.

### **Percy Schmeiser Campaigns Internationally For Farmers' Rights To Save Their Own Seed**

Farm activist Percy Schmeiser, Bruno, Sask. farmer, has been touring the world for four years campaigning for farmers' rights to save their own seed. In his travels he meets with presidents, prime ministers, ministers of environment and speaks to government legislatures and parliaments all over the world. In Canada he has met with Prince Edward Island's Premier and Minister of the Environment to date. No other political group in Canada, including Saskatchewan, has apparently heard of him yet or

else they are supporting the transnational corporations position to sell farmers seed every year.

### **Food Banks a Growth Industry in Saskatchewan**

Saskatchewan has 43 per cent of the farm land in Canada and only a million people and yet we can't feed ourselves. A couple of years ago some farmers were driving up to 70 miles to the food bank. Self-sufficiency was a part of our culture in the 1930s when I grew up. At that time we were very aware of what our neighbours or ourselves were short of. I remember driving three miles once for a bag of potatoes. However, at that time most farmhouses had earthen cellars (cement basements came later) which were excellent for storing vegetables. Today few people have root cellars and we rely heavily on California and Florida grown fruits and vegetables.

### **We Could Build Energy Efficient Straw Bale Solar Heated Greenhouses**

Here we have solar heated straw bale buildings that could be designed as greenhouses that could grow all of our green vegetables and a lot of our fruits. We also could design prefab root cellars to store root vegetables on the farm, in urban yards or community storage centers. We need a program to develop community self-sufficiency in all of the above plus poultry, eggs, beef, pork and buffalo. Two years ago two trucks ran into trains south of the Highway 1. They were hauling potatoes from Florida to Edmonton. Both Alberta and Saskatchewan have large irrigation projects that grow potatoes. In this world of high priced energy and increasing shortages, we must do some planning. We can no longer afford this waste of energy.

### **Farm Crisis**

Saskatchewan is in a worse farm crisis than it was in the 1930s when I grew up. This year we have had the disastrous frost in August. However, even before that we had one family member and in many instances both husbands and wives working off the farm to keep the farm surviving. Reports show they were driving 50 miles one way to work. The average age of farmers is 59 years. This winter I am aware than many of the younger farmers have gone to the "oil patch" to work to make enough money for this spring's seeding. Machinery, fuel and fertilizer costs are soaring. In the past three years we have had a record number of farm auction sales. Some farmers were going to retire hut many others decided to get out of farming before they lost everything. In the early 1930s before we had the Canadian Wheat Board, my father was hauling wheat to Wymark, Sask. for 19-29 cents a bushel. When you take inflation into account, that is \$2.60- \$3.30 per bushel. On Jan. 10, 2005, wheat at Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, Davidson, is worth \$2.76 per bushel for #1 - 13.5 per cent protein. There might be a payment. Unfortunately most of the wheat after the August frost is grading feed and selling for less than \$1 per bushel.

### **Organic Products The Only Bright Spot in Today's Market**

The only bright spot in the market today is organic products. I have recently heard of wheat selling for \$9 per bushel, flax for \$23 per bushel, oats for \$3.50 per bushel and barley \$4.50 per bushel. However, there are only 1,400-1,500 certified organic farmers in the province.

The vast majority of chemical farmers don't have confidence in their ability to produce certified organic food, particularly the group under 59 years which is the average age of farmers today. However, it is quite understandable. About 40 years ago I read a newly published book *The Hidden Persuaders* by Vance Packard. The book said, "If you spent enough on advertising you could sell anything." I guess pesticide company management read the same book. It is obvious because the transnational chemical companies increase their advertising every year or when profits drop to convince farmers they cannot operate without chemicals. It is obvious they also add the cost of the advertising to the price of pesticides. In effect, the farmer pays for his own brain washing.

### **Farmers Have Lost Their Informal Source of Farm Organization Education**

The Canadian Wheat Board was established in 1924 and the United Farmers of Canada was organized in 1922. The United Farmers of Canada became the Saskatchewan Farmers Union in 1948. Ever since the end of World War II, most farm communities have had a Saskatchewan Wheat Pool committee and a Saskatchewan Farmers Local, (after 1969) National Farm Union Local. Both organizations met at least once a month. The United Grain Growers had a less active country organization. At all of these meetings grain and livestock prices were discussed, marketing and grading of grain and any other issues of the day. In many meetings resolutions were discussed, voted on and forwarded to the head offices of their respective organization and some sent to government and other organizations. Farmers no longer have access to this type of education of farm issues. At one time I knew what everybody's position was on major farm issues when I met them on the street.

Today I don't know anyone's position. The Romanow government turned the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool into a corporation by provincial legislation in 1995 (with no vote of farmer members.) That was the end of SWP committees. Many younger farmers were pleased to inherit their fathers' farm but would have nothing to do with the National Farmers Union, the organization their parents helped build. The NFU still exists but at a very low level of activity. Farmers no longer have that type of informal education. Perhaps it is time the CWB and CGC supplied instructors to hold community college classes on the marketing and grading of grain.

### **Recommendations to Premier Calvert and Crew**

Demand that the federal government subsidize chemical farmers to make the switch to organic farming as recommended on page 184 of the federal government's Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Agriculture Report published in the year 2000. The world is hungry for certified organic food and Canadian farmers want to survive financially. Consumers in Canada want organic food and a clean environment. Demand that the federal government rescind the Plant Breeders Rights Act to restore farmers' basic and traditional rights to save their own seed.

The provincial government should recognize the nutritional value of organic food and start serving it in hospitals (for cancer patients in particular), school lunch programs, senior homes and government restaurants.

The provincial government should establish a program to seek out and establish safe sources of drinking water (unpolluted with pesticides) so everyone will have a safe source of water for drinking and cooking.

The government should establish a method of testing citizens' blood for pesticide residues the same way as Olympic athletes get their blood tested for drugs and marijuana.

Occupational Health and Safety should start keeping accurate records of deaths and illnesses caused by pesticides. They don't keep any now.

The University should establish a program to graduate agrologists in organic agriculture.

All cereal grains, oilseeds and legumes should be cleaned to export standards before they are shipped to help develop local livestock and poultry enterprises and also to develop self-sufficient local communities.

The federal government will not be able to supply enough money to keep our national Medicare program alive if we don't clean up our environment.

Elmer Laird, president  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

April 19, 1993 Davidson Leader

### **900 Percent Increase In Chemical Use**

Agricultural Chemical Sales Agencies (including advertising), Saskatchewan Agriculture and farmer-owned grain (and chemical?) marketing co-operatives have been extremely successful in selling chemicals to farmers in the last twenty years. Statistics Canada, Census Overview of Canadian Agriculture (1971 - 1991) reports that herbicide, pesticide, and fungicide sales increased in Saskatchewan an astronomical 3649.1% over the twenty year period. Sales in 1971 were \$5,835,110.00 and \$218,764,523.00 in 1991. At the same time, chemical sales in Canada that were reported at \$720,887,574.00 only increased 1,603.2%. Saskatchewan used almost one third of all the pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides used in Canada in 1991. If you take inflation into consideration, (Statistics Canada reports that a 1971 dollar was worth about 25 in 1991) it still means an actual increase of over 900%.

Is there a valid reason for the rapid increase in the use of toxic agricultural chemicals over the twenty year period other than super salesmanship? There may be a partially valid reason. Weeds and pests have been developing a resistance to chemicals over the years; however, it is difficult to believe that it would require 900% more today than in 1971. If that were true, it would be real scary to think of how much chemical will be required to control weeds and pests in the next twenty years and how increased pollution would affect people, soil, water, and food.

Could there be other reasons? Are farmers getting poor advice from Saskatchewan Agriculture and chemical sales agencies? Is new farm equipment not properly designed to control weeds without chemicals? Are crop rotations being used to control weeds? Are today's farmers not as skilled at operating farm equipment as their fathers and grandfathers were?

Farmers in the 1940's produced large grain crops for the war effort with horses, worn out tractors and farm machinery, and no chemicals; they had just come through the depression of the thirties and very few had an opportunity to replace equipment.

Is the excessive use of agricultural chemicals today because most farms are understaffed in this depression and farmers are working off the farm? Are we using chemicals instead of labour? If we are, it's a poor trade off. The (IRIP program is indirectly subsidizing jobs in chemical companies, perhaps the Green Plan For Agriculture (which will be in place next year) should be used to transfer jobs from chemical companies to on-farm jobs to reduce chemical use and protect the environment.

The promotion of agriculture chemicals by Saskatchewan Agriculture is interpreted by many consumers, or taxpayers, to be a direct subsidy to trans-national chemical companies. In addition, many are convinced that the use of university laboratories and staff for agriculture chemical research is also a by the Provincial Government. The Provincial Government in the present austerity budget, is reducing funding for Health, Education, and many other programs. The trans-national chemical companies seem to be doing quite well. If their products are really needed it shouldn't require the support of the provincial government to sell them. Will they withdraw their support to reduce the deficit? Are the farmer- owned grain marketing co-operatives providing a service to the transnational chemical companies or the stressed-out farm economy when they sell agricultural chemicals?



October 16, 1995 Davidson Leader

The Back to The Farm Research Foundation will sponsor 2 one-day workshops for certified organic farmers and gardeners and anyone who is interested in moving into organic production. The purpose of the meetings will be to study the possibility of establishing a grassroots farm policy organization of certified organic producers. The meetings will be held in Davidson in late November and early January. Although no speakers have been invited, we hope to have speakers from the Canadian Wheat Board, the Canadian Organic Advisory Board and a panel of people who are presently marketing organic products. The agenda for the second meeting will take direction from the first meeting.

Several events have come to light recently that will be bringing about rapid positive changes in agriculture, and we believe organic farmers must be in a position to provide leadership in developing meaningful policies to meet their own needs, the needs of the many conventional farmers who will move to organic farming and our customers at home and abroad. Following are a number of facts that have recently come to light that we believe will force rapid change:

**1. Chemical Agriculture is Obsolete.** About the middle of this past summer, a brochure appeared without any publicity or fanfare among the many bulletins in Rural Service Centres on chemical agriculture. It is entitled "Resistance of Weeds to Herbicides". It was published by the Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba Departments of Agriculture. The publication was financed by Cyanamid Canada Inc. and Farline. Referring to "herbicide resistance", it says, "When herbicides fail due to development of (plant) resistance, they will fail in subsequent years, regardless of weather or application procedures." It goes on to say, "Rotating herbicides is only a first aid measure in preventing this problem. Long term management means shifting your cropping system toward integrated approaches to weed control."

Many farmers in this district have sprayed the same weeds several times this season with very poor results. The chemical companies, instead of having one broad spectrum herbicide, have developed a great many for every kind of a weed infestation possible. The results have been very expensive and not very effective. Chemical farmers are beginning to realize that chemical farming is obsolete.

**2. Human Male Sperm Count Down 50% in the Western World.** The CBC program "Witness" on July 4th, 1995, aired a program entitled "Sex Under Siege". It reported on studies from a number of European and American universities that showed that male sperm count had dropped 50% of what it originally was as a result of exposure to pollution from toxic chemicals. The study was carried out on non-farm males who were not in direct contact with agricultural chemicals.

However, the effects of low sperm count will not show up in the livestock industry very soon. Bulls are tested for sperm count; however, with the widespread use of artificial insemination very likely there will be enough fertile males to maintain production for some time. Today human fertility clinics are on the increase and Federal Health Minister, Diane Marleau, is concerned about some of the reproductive practices of humans. It is obvious mankind in the industrialized nations cannot afford much further

reduction in the sperm count or the reproduction of humans, domestic animals and wildlife will become impossible. It is obvious the release of toxic chemicals into the environment must be stopped and the total environment cleaned up.

**3. Antibiotics No Longer Effective in Many Instances.** About half of the antibiotics used in Canada have been used in livestock and poultry production. Present day hog barns, poultry houses and large feedlots that confine livestock and poultry in small areas are rapidly becoming obsolete because antibiotics will not kill many of today's germs and viruses. Reports are coming from every direction that many germs or disease causing bacteria are resistant to antibiotics. Broad spectrum antibiotics are causing germs to mutate and develop new germs that are antibiotic resistant. Present livestock and poultry methods of production relying on antibiotics in practical terms are obsolete.

The main reason antibiotics were used in livestock and poultry production was because of the unhealthy conditions created by "confinement". Large numbers of livestock and poultry confined to small places was an excellent place for disease epidemics to run rampant and destroy the whole herd or flock. It will no doubt be necessary to move to an "open range" type of production which no doubt will be more labour intensive. However, the new type of production must provide as healthy conditions as possible for livestock and poultry to have good health without daily medications.

Grassroots knowledge and skills are required to facilitate change. Collectively, organic farmers have the knowledge and skills required to facilitate the changes needed in agriculture. Pure, unpolluted air, water and nutritious certified organic food are going to be more important than medication in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. We believe that society as a whole needs a grassroots organization of certified organic farmers that will develop policies and programs that will lead to a healthy lifestyle for our nation.

We would welcome comments and advice on this proposal.

September 13, 2004 Davidson Leader

### **Continued use of pesticides could destroy productivity of Canadian soils**

Open letter to Terry Stone, Editor of *Alive*, a journal of natural health

Seventy-four year old professor of biochemistry, Dr. Wee-Chong Tan of the Lester B. Pearson International University of Victoria, B.C. says, "If we don't quit using pesticides at an ever increasing rate we will destroy the productivity of Canadian soils, and soils in a lot of the rest of the world as well."

I am writing to you as a last resort because I know from experience the national or daily press people are so dominated by the transnational drug and chemical (pesticide) companies they are not prepared to report the warning in this letter to other Canadians about the loss of the productivity of the soil.

Dr. Tan came to Canada 31 years ago to set up the Chinese section of the Lester B. Pearson International University on Vancouver Island. Since his retirement, he has travelled all over the world visiting organic farms and has written a series of articles supporting organic farming as a biochemist.

This letter is reporting on the impending take over of the family farm by the transnational drug and chemical companies.

On one hand, they sell us pesticides that are making us sick and on the other hand, they will also sell us drugs, hopefully, to make us well.

Pesticides were developed in World War I and II for the purpose of biological warfare. They really have no place in agriculture and we have lost over 50 years of time in developing biological controls for weeds and pests and other innovative ways of farming.

You are our last hope of getting national coverage on the impending disaster on the loss of the food production ability of Canadian farms.

Since the spring of 2004, our Saskatchewan NDP government have spent considerable time reducing services to rural communities, or it could be called abandoning rural communities.

This spring they started reducing services to rural communities. They closed 21 rural service centres (Agronomist offices). They have reduced the long-term care beds at the Davidson Health Centre from 40 to 30 and have reduced the health services in many other Saskatchewan centres as well. On Sept. 1, 2004, 70 people attended a meeting at the Davidson Community Centre to hear the proposed amalgamation of the rural school divisions from 32 to 13 in the province. Davidson is a town of 1,150 people serving a surrounding community of another 15,000 people. It is now abundantly clear the NDP government are reducing the services to rural communities because they won't be needed when the transnational corporations take over the family farms.

It all started in 1991 when the Brian Mulroney federal government passed the *Plant Breeder's Rights Act*, which gave the transnational corporations the right to patent their own seed: (It was supposed to save the taxpayer money). Since then, transnational drug and chemical companies have rapidly increased their control of family farms in Canada.

The CCF/NDP, Liberal, Conservatives and all other political parties supported the family farm system of agriculture production from the time the prairies were opened up for homesteading until 1991.

In 1991, the present NDP government under the leadership of Premier Roy Romanow abandoned their support for the family farm, orderly market of farm products, changed the largest farmer-owned grain handling co-operative (The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool) in the world into a corporation in 1995, without a vote to approximately 50,000 farm members.

It has now become abundantly obvious the Saskatchewan NDP government are winding up services to rural Saskatchewan and making more room for the corporate take over of the family farms. The federal government and all provincial governments in Canada support chemical agriculture "only." It is difficult to know if federal and provincial politicians understand what they are doing or if they are just responding to the drug and chemical lobby and believe this is the easiest way out. It reminds me of the age-old saying "Nero fiddled while Rome burned."

A Saskatchewan farmer's average age is 59 years. We don't have any training programs to encourage young people to farm.

About two per cent of Saskatchewan farmers are certified organic, the vast majority of the other 98 per cent of chemical farmers are addicted to the use of agricultural chemicals or pesticides and are very resistant to change. I haven't heard of any university or Saskatchewan government cafeterias serving certified organic food, although it is being served in the five cafeterias in the House of Commons.

There is very strong evidence that Mad Cow Disease (BSE) is caused by the pesticides that are used for warble fly control. It has been over a year since the first case of BSE was discovered. However, I have never heard any recommendations in the national press that the solution could be that everyone should produce as healthy a meat as possible. Farmers producing certified organic beef have not experienced any drop in prices since May 20, 2003. There is considerable evidence that there would be an unlimited market in Europe for certified organic beef, pork or poultry.

The House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, chaired by Toronto MP Charles Caccia, recommend on Page 184 that "Organic farmers should receive tax incentives subsidies or supports to make the transition to organic agriculture."

The Christian Churches of Canada have not yet decided that poisoning (God's) soil with toxic pesticides and herbicides is a sin. None of the governments of Canada (federal or provincial) have decided that it is illegal to poison our soils with toxic pesticides.

German scientists are now telling Europeans that organic food unequivocally is more nutritious than food produced with agriculture chemicals. No one here in Canada, academic or otherwise, has apparently reached that conclusion to date. Even nutritional experts being interviewed on TV or radio programs never mention the importance of certified organic food in the diet of Canadians. However, here in Canada, I haven't heard of a university teaching or graduating students with degrees in organic agriculture. More progressive universities in Europe like the ones in Holland or Denmark have been graduating students in organic agriculture for at least 15 years.

Here in Saskatchewan we have the highest rate of breast and cervical cancer and the second highest rate of prostate cancer in Canada. We also use a third of pesticides used in Canada and I know that pesticides are causing cancer and many other illnesses. We also have over one-third of the cultivated acreage (43 per cent) in Canada.

Dr. Allan Cessna of the National Hydrology Water Institute, Saskatoon, has reported that for several years all our surface water and one-third of our deep wells are polluted with herbicides. Spraying of pesticides starts when the ground thaws out in the spring and continues for seven months until freeze up.

The introduction of GMO grains and oil seeds require stronger herbicides. It is very obvious that if we don't clean up the environment our Medicare system will go bankrupt.

I sincerely hope you give this your immediate attention.

Elmer Laird, president  
Back To The Farm  
Research Foundation

November 3, 1997 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:  
The National Farmers' Union  
Attention: National Board of Directors

Dear Sirs:

Re: Developing a system to provide information to farmers on the kind and quality of food consumers and end processors want.

Today in this "global economy" transnational drug, chemical and seed companies are using public relations (salesmanship and advertising) to convince farmers to grow crops that will make the most money for the corporations. Federal and provincial governments, as a result of powerful lobbies, are also advising farmers to use the products that transnational corporations are promoting, even if the consumer or end processor doesn't want the food produced by that particular method.

Example #1) Wrong Variety of Malting Barley. In an article on page 70 of the October 16, 1997, "Western Producer" entitled "Barley Growers Urged to Remember The Customer" Jack Tyre, grain manager for the Canadian Making Company, is quoted extensively. Tyre said, "Find out what the end user wants and grow it. It sounds simple, but producers tend to be swayed more by the person selling the seed than the company brewing the beer." He went on to say "The quality and volume of two-row varieties far exceed market demand. There hasn't been a single sample of Oxbow barley selected for malting this season." He said, "When producers start thinking about what to grow next year, they should dig a little deeper and find out what the market wants."

Example #2) Chicken Manure Fed To Livestock. An article on page 23 of the October 16, 1997, edition of the "Western Producer" is entitled "Chicken Manure Discouraged As Cattle Feed". The dateline is Washington, D.C. (Reuter). The article says, "A United States doctors' group called on beef producers to voluntarily ban the practice of feeding chicken manure to cattle." The Physicians' Committee for Responsible Medicine also urges the U.S. Department of Agriculture to investigate the health risk of the practice, which is common in most poultry producing states. Chicken manure is filled with disease causing organisms, heavy metals and veterinary drugs the chickens have managed to expel.

Dr. Neil Barnard, President of PCRMR, reports that in Arkansas, a large chicken producing state, farmers are feeding a total of about 12 million kilograms of chicken manure to cattle.

Example #3) Concerns About Mad Cow Disease. Dr. Neil Barnard, President of PCRMR, also raised concerns for the potential for mad cow disease to become a problem in U.S. cattle herds as it has been in Europe. It is believed that bovine spongiform encephalopathy (the scientific name for mad cow disease) is spread by the feeding of rendered waste animal parts to cattle for protein. The United Nations Health Organization has recommended an international ban on feeding rendered waste meat parts from livestock and poultry to livestock. Reports indicate Canada and the U.S. have made some effort to prohibit this process but apparently it is still happening.

Example #4) Is Canola Oil Safe? “Health Naturally”, a Canadian health food magazine, has a panel of three experts who answer subscribers’ questions. Following is a question and answer from the 1997 October/November issue:

*Dear Carola Barczak: Is it harmful to one’s health to use canola oil? I understand that gene tinkering is done on canola plants and there is no law to say this must be noted on the labels. How can consumers ensure that the canola oil they buy is safe, or should it be avoided entirely? P.V.*

*Dear P.V. Canola is genetically engineered in Canada to be resistant to herbicides, allowing farmers to spray more chemicals to kill weeds without damaging Crops. Since fat-soluble herbicides tend to concentrate in oils, does canola oil absorb the herbicidal toxin residue from the soil, as do peanuts? Are there long term effects from ingesting such genetically engineered food products? Unfortunately, the answers to these questions are unknown.*

*Canola oil cannot be heated above 140°F without breaking down, so it is not a good oil to cook with. Better choices for cooking and baking are light olive oil, butter or ghee (clarified butter.)*

*The only advantage to canola oil is its content of omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids, but flaxseed oil provides both these nutrients and can be purchased organically—either as oil or in capsules. Alternatively, cold water fish is a good source of omega-3s, while extra virgin olive oil, primrose oil, borage and black currant seed oils all contain omega-6s. All things considered these are safer choices than canola oil.*

*Carola Barczak, MA, RMT.*

Example #5) BST or BGH, the Milk Hormone. Milk from cows injected with the hormone BST is on the market in the U.S. without labelling. The Canadian government is considering the question here and milk from cows injected with BST maybe on the market in Canada soon. Members of health organizations are very concerned about the product and so are many dairy farmers.

Example #6) Hormone Fed Beef. The United States is hell-bent on marketing hormone free beef in Europe and the Europeans will have no part of it. The U.S. has had some diplomatic “wins” at GATT but the Europeans still say no. An Edmonton slaughter house is convinced there is a market for “hormone free” beef in Europe and Japan and is prepared to start processing it if sufficient volume is available. Canadian Federal Agriculture, to its credit, developed a certification program last year to certify hormone-free beef but was unable to get the program off the ground.

Example #7) Certified Organic Food Products. Foreign buyers have been asking Canadian Wheat Board salesmen about certified organic wheat for at least ten years. The Wheat Board is still using the buy-back method and doesn’t communicate market requests for organic grains to producers. Many certified organic products are on the market but transnationals and governments are certainly not promoting them or advising farmers where the market is.

Example #8) Antibiotics in Livestock Feed. About half of the antibiotics used in Canada are fed to livestock. Medical doctors are urging that this practice be discontinued because their patients are building up a resistance to antibiotics. In fact, many people are allergic to antibiotics because of this practice.

Family farmers who are in farming for the long haul know that quality will pay off. They need a reliable source of information about Canadian and international “market demand”

(not corporate demand). The National Farmers' Union is the only farm organization in Canada with a direct dues-paying membership. It is the logical organization to supply this type of information to their farmer members.

When are you going to start? Consumer concern about methods of producing grains, oilseeds, fruit, vegetables, herbs, cattle, hogs and poultry is rapidly increasing.

Sincerely,  
Elmer Laird, President  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation



October 9, 2006 Davidson Leader

### **Federal Liberals had their chance at Rome**

Open letter to:

The honourable Wayne Easter, Official opposition (Liberal) critic for agriculture

Dear Wayne:

Your article in the Oct. 2 edition of *The Davidson Leader* covers all agriculture issues but the main one. Historians when discussing preventable disasters, often say “Well Nero fiddled while Rome Burned”. In May 2000 the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development produced an excellent report, “Pesticides, Making The Right Choice for The Protection of Health and The Environment” when the Liberal government was still in power. It is an excellent all party 212 page report chaired by your former colleague, Charles Caccia, former Liberal MP and environmentalist from Toronto. The report recommends on page 184 that all Canadian farmers be subsidized to go organic. Well Wayne, I never heard the environment mentioned in all the political debates leading up to the January 23, 2006 federal -election, or since. However, both you and the Liberal party have in effect done just like Nero. You have fiddled not while Rome burned but while pollution levels have rapidly increased world wide in the last six years.

An article in volume one, issue six of the *Organic Lifestyles Magazine* entitled “Toxic Nation, Toxic Canadians” says in part:

“Two muckraking studies by Environmental Defence, a Toronto-based environmental group, strongly suggest that Canadians of all ages are polluted with a toxic mix of harmful industrial chemicals. And despite the Canadian government’s efforts to control toxic chemicals, the volume of harmful chemicals released into the environment and making their way into Canadian’s bodies continues to increase.

According to *Polluted Children, Toxic Nation: A Report on Pollution in Canadian Families* released in May 2006, Environmental Defence tested the blood and urine of 13 people from communities across Canada. Seven children and six adults from British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick were checked for 68 different toxins. Lab tests found a total of 46 toxins in the volunteers, including flame retardants, mercury and lead, and even banned substances such as PCBs and DDT.

Many of the chemicals discovered in the bodies of Canadians are associated with cancer, hormone disruption, reproductive disorders, respiratory illnesses and developmental delays in children. (The first Toxic Nation study, which surveyed 11 volunteers and had similar harrowing results, was released in 2005.)”

Here in Saskatchewan, Dr. Allan Cessna, National Hydrology Water Institute at Saskatoon several years ago reported that all surface water in Saskatchewan and a third of the deep wells are polluted with herbicides. More recently he reported that pesticides sprayed in Russia are drifting over the North Pole and arriving here. Sad to say but children born today are exposed to toxic pesticide residues from the time they are conceived until they die.

Rachel Carson who published her book *Silent Spring* sounded a toxic wake-up call in 1962. She said, "Can anyone believe it is possible to lay down a barrage of poison on the surface of the earth without making it unfit for all life".

The title of the book implied that sometime it would become spring and we would no longer see the birds flying around or the frogs croaking and wildlife would no longer be there even if we humans manage to survive. The *New York Herald Tribune* said about *Silent Spring* at the time of printing, "A smashing indictment that faces up to the disastrous consequences for both nature and man of the chemical mass warfare that is being waged today indiscriminately against insects, weeds and fungi". The *Boston Herald* said, "The thing to remember is that the author is not an alarmist but a meticulously trained scientist who shuns publicity and controversy but whose findings were too catastrophic to keep to herself". The following email by Mickey Z. (\*OpEdNews.com\* Original Content at [http://www.opednews.com/articles/opedne\\_mickey\\_z06092\\_1\\_22those\\_in\\_power\\_are.htm](http://www.opednews.com/articles/opedne_mickey_z06092_1_22those_in_power_are.htm)) said in part:

"The use and abuse of pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides, Carson posited, were directly responsible for myriad health hazards not only for humans, but all life on the planet. "If the Bill of Rights contains no guarantee that a citizen shall be secure against lethal poisons distributed either by private individuals or by public officials," she wrote, "it is surely because our forefathers... could conceive no such, problem."

*Silent Spring* showed that people are not master of nature, but rather part of nature," says Carson's biographer, John Henricksson. "It was a revolutionary thought at the time. Today no one seriously questions its truth, but in 1962 it was a direct attack on the values and assumptions of a society."

We could use some of that "revolutionary thought" stuff today as we produce pesticides at a rate more than 13,000 times faster than we did in 1962.

The Environmental Protection Agency - hardly a bulwark against corporate domination - considers 30 per cent of all insecticides, 60 per cent of all herbicides, and 90 per cent of all fungicides to be carcinogenic, yet Americans spend about \$7 billion on 21,000 different pesticide products each year.

"Prior to World War II, annual worldwide use of pesticides ran right around zero," says author Derrick Jensen. "By now it's 500 billion tons, increasing every year."

As a result, about 860 Americans suffer from pesticide poisoning every single day; that's almost 315,000 cases per year. Some of the many symptoms of pesticide poisoning include: altered personality, memory loss, difficulty concentrating, dizziness, headaches, hyperactivity in children, wheezing cough, liver damage, kidney damage, constipation/diarrhea, decreased sex drive, decreased sperm count, severe muscle weakness and cancer. The worldwide death rate from pesticide poisonings is more than 200,000 per year.

Well Wayne, I am writing to you for two reasons:

1) To give both you and the Liberal Party hell for doing nothing since year 2000 about organic agriculture when the environmental committee produced the report recommending that all farmers be subsidized to go organic.

2) To encourage you personally to take the leadership to introduce the above policy. You are the most qualified man in Ottawa to do the job. You are a farmer from Prince Edward Island and a former president of the National Farmers Union for ten years.

Wayne, you have met and spoke to thousands of Canadian farmers from coast to coast. In fact we are trying to send you some help.

David Orchard of Saskatchewan is a long time organic farmer that is attempting to get a leadership role in the Liberal Party. I am convinced that if anyone can bring in subsidies for all farmers to move to organic you will together accomplish the job.

I know you will remember 9/11 the day the World Trade building in New York was destroyed by terrorists. You were traveling with a group of about 12 MPs and senators who visited me at Davidson, Sask. It was a Federal Liberal National Committee that would be making recommendations for the future of agriculture.

We met in my living room and you admitted that day the Liberal Government had done nothing for organic agriculture or cleaning up the rural environment. That was five years ago and you have done nothing since, just remember Wayne, and tell your Liberal colleagues, every day the world is getting one day closer to the *Silent Spring* Rachel Carson warned us about 44 years ago.

Elmer Laird, president  
Back To The Farm  
Research Foundation

November 24, 2003 Davidson Leader

**Members of NFU should consider pesticide addiction as method of solving crisis**

Open letter to:

Darrin Qualman, Executive Secretary, NFU  
The National Conference Steering Committee, NFU  
The National Board of Directors, NFU  
Delegates to the National 2003 Convention, NFU

Dear Members and Officials:

Re: Recognize Psychological Pesticide Dependency or Pesticide Addiction, Method of Solving our Environmental, Agricultural, Health and Economic Crisis

Addiction counsellors tell me that both terms mean the same thing. However, the term psychological pesticide dependency will probably get a milder reaction from pesticide addicts.

I have discussed pesticide addiction with an addiction counsellor, Duane Cameron, a couple of times. He says it can be just as strong of an addiction as alcohol, drugs, tobacco or gambling. However, alcohol, drugs and tobacco are a physical addiction where pesticide addiction is psychological. For example, they tell me that if an alcoholic wakes up in the morning and doesn't know where he/she is going to get a drink of alcohol, they panic.

Just think what would happen if the government announced on the 6 o'clock news today that there would be no more pesticides used. The panic would be heard in outer space. In the case of pesticides, the pesticide advertisers continue to fan the flame every spring and all summer advertising pesticides.

Many farmers today, because of economic or environmental concerns, would like to stop spraying. However, they are terrified because they think weeds will ruin their crops and the pesticide advertisers continue to assure them the weeds will destroy everything if they quit spraying. As a result of their addiction, they are in a state of denial (like alcoholics) and deny the health, economic and environmental consequences of using pesticides.

The old guys like me that grew up in the 1930s in the age before pesticides were used to weeds. They were in all crops, some more than others.

Today's farmers under 60 have all grown up in an era of pesticide culture. Canada's agricultural colleges graduate students in chemical agriculture only. More progressive universities in Holland and Denmark have been graduating students in both chemical and organic agriculture for at least 15 years. Our federal government has a policy to promote chemical agriculture only. I haven't heard of any province promoting organic agriculture yet unless it is Quebec. If this continues, the transnationals gain increasingly more control and our food, water and air becomes more polluted every year.

Women, both rural and urban, are growing increasingly more concerned about the kind of polluted environment their children and grandchildren are growing up in, but farm women are having a very difficult time convincing their husbands to quit spraying.

In fact many of the women are working “off the farm” to help the family survive financially-including paying for the pesticides.

Pesticides were developed in World Wars I and II for biological warfare. They should have never been used for agriculture and have been obsolete for a long time. Today we are experiencing weeds and pests developing a greater resistance to pesticides. As a result farmers have had to use stronger applications of pesticides to do what they want to do.

Finally, the pesticide companies have had to move to GMO crops because if farmers used the pesticides strong enough to kill the weeds, they would also kill the crops.

The GMO crops are designed to stand stronger herbicides. So the GMO battle is on. Unfortunately, the battle is not only over GMOs. It is also over who will control the family farm and the worst scenario is “What will happen to the soil if we continue using more and more agricultural chemicals?”

Environment is a word that is foreign to the transnational pesticide companies. Corporate mentality says that you exploit something financially for as long as you can and then move your investments elsewhere.

Here in Saskatchewan, Dr. Allan Cessna, researcher with the National Hydrology Water Institute, reports that all of our surface water is polluted with herbicide and one-third of our deep wells as well.

If we continue pesticide use for very long at increasing rates, the productivity of our soil will be ruined. Saskatchewan also has the highest rate of prostate cancer in Canada. We use one-third of all pesticides used in Canada, and I know that pesticides are one of the main causes of cancer.

The addition counsellor I have talked to is Mr. Duane Cameron. He is a counsellor at the Cedar Lodge Addiction Centre at Dundurn. He says there are between 90 and 100 addiction counsellors in Saskatchewan. His training was a two-year course at SIAST. They have an organization called the Canadian Addiction Counsellors Certification Board. He teaches a course on substance addiction at the Saskatoon Community College and is available at any time for consultation.

I sincerely hope the NFU will seriously look at the question of pesticide addiction. There is a precedent for it. Angus Campbell was a farmer from Weldon, Sask. He was on the SFU board in the 1950s when I was aboard member. He had an alcohol problem and he persuaded the SFU board to make a presentation to a provincial alcohol commission or inquiry in 1955. He was appointed to make the submission.

As a result he was employed by the provincial government to head up the alcohol (at that time) addiction program for Saskatchewan. He worked in the program until his retirement and died about a year ago. The Angus Campbell Centre in Moose Jaw is named after him. (Box 118, Moose Jaw, S6J 1 K3, phone 693-5977).

We have a very high level of stress in our farming communities. I believe pesticide addictions, the cost of pesticides plus health and safety are the main contributors to stress. Also added is the worry about the corporate take-over of the family farm.

Elmer Laird, president  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

May 12, 2003 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:

All Canadian farmers who want to move from chemical to organic agriculture.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, affectionately known as “FDR” was president of the United States from March 4, 1933 to April 12, 1945. He frequently said in his speeches or fireside chats as they were called, “There is nothing to fear but fear itself.” This applies to your transition to move to organic agriculture in my opinion. You will be working with a different philosophy. A chemical farmer is attempting to control agriculture and an organic farmer will be attempting to work with Mother Nature.

Personally, I like to work with Mother Nature. She is a powerful old girl and I like to have her on my side, or work on her side. Not only does it mean working with nature but it also means working with other organic farmers, particularly when it comes to sharing information. I have been involved over many years and everyone I meet has something to share. It makes life exciting like in pioneer years. To start with the most important question you need to ask yourself is:

1. Am I addicted to the use of pesticides? You may deny it but don't give up. We have many kinds of addictions. The most common ones to date are alcohol, drug and gambling (addictions). From now on you will be hearing more and more about pesticide addiction. Pesticide addiction is most like gambling addiction, it is a psychological addiction. Drug and alcohol addiction Drug and alcohol addiction creates a demand or desire to put alcohol or drugs into your body. To test yourself for pesticide addiction you should ask yourself the following question:

2. Would I panic if the government said tomorrow that you will not be able to buy any more pesticides after today, May 12, 2003? The reason I think you should ask yourself this question is because I have been told that if an alcoholic wakes up in the morning and finds out he will not be able to get another drink he panics. I think if the government cut the sale of pesticides this week there would be a terrific demonstration or panic by chemical farmers all across the nation. The question we need to ask ourselves is:

3. Why the panic, we didn't have herbicides and pesticides until 1948 here at Davidson. Prior to that time we grew food all over the world with very primitive equipment, compared to today's sophisticated farm equipment. Pesticides were developed in World Wars I and II for biological warfare, not for agriculture. Some smart entrepreneurs decided to sell pesticides to farmers and with the help of the billions of dollars spent on advertising they have probably promoted record sales in a product we really don't need. Advertising has created a fear in chemical farmers. When I ask a chemical farmer if they are going organic this spring the usual response is, “What about the weeds?” This is a surprising answer because farm technology has moved ahead by leaps and bounds in 55 years since 1948. Weeds can be controlled mechanically, by intercropping and allelopathy. The question now we should ask ourselves is:

4. How well is our production doing with all the herbicides and pesticides we are using?

The answer is not very good. We have 43 (some say 47) per cent of the cultivated land in Canada and we only have about one million people, a little over 3 per cent of

Canada's population. We have a very sophisticated agriculture technology and spend millions on research but the fact is we are not feeding ourselves. Line ups at food banks are getting longer, the City of Regina is planning on doubling the size of its food bank. In the fall of 2001 farmers were driving 70 miles to get food from the Regina food bank. In many instances the farm husband or wife is working off the farm to assure the financial success of the farm. In some instances both are working off the farm. This makes for a very stressed out lifestyle.

Dr. Allan Cessna, National Hydrology Institute, reports that all our surface water in Saskatchewan is polluted with herbicides and one-third of our deep wells. I can't find any studies showing to what extent our food is polluted with pesticides. If we don't move to organic, conditions will only get worse. German scientist Dr. Fritz Baltzer reports that organic food is more nutritious than chemically raised food. And consumers are demanding it. In many instances it is selling for twice the price.

5. Why do chemical farmers expect to get increased prices for chemically raised food that many consumers know is of an inferior quality? Particularly the foreign buyer is more aware than ever. There is also an increasing awareness about the hazards of pesticide pollution to children. (See elsewhere on this page about Dr. Elizabeth Guillette coming to Saskatchewan).

*The Manitoba Co-operator* (farm paper) reported back in the winter that Dole Pineapple had pulled out of the Hawaiian Islands because their land has become polluted with pesticides and nitrogen fertilizer and wouldn't produce food. Spraying season at one time lasted two weeks here, now it lasts for seven months. The question is, how long will it be at the rate we are using pesticides and fertilizers before our land becomes unproductive?

I have hesitated to write about pesticide addiction for several months because a neighbour told me that if I did, "farmers would get their backs up" and would be unapproachable. Perhaps that will happen, I don't know. However, if all chemical farmers decide they were addicted there wouldn't be enough addiction counsellors to go around. Here in Saskatchewan ever since the pioneers homesteaded the land, farmers worked together to solve their problems, often with the use of co-operatives. Perhaps Saskatchewan will be the first province to establish a farmers pesticide addiction co-operative?

Elmer Laird, president,  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

July 22, 2002 Davidson Leader

Premier Lorne Calvert  
Mr. Mark Waitman, Minister of Highways  
Mr. Eldon Lautermilch, Minister of Tourism  
Gentleman

Re: Highway spraying herbicides and the rural telephone directory

About a week ago someone from the Department of Highways telephoned me to assure me that even though they were going to start spraying herbicides on Highway 11 from Saskatoon to Regina, they recognized that I was an organic farmer and they would not spray the highway right by my farm.

I was pleased that the government recognizes that there are organic farmers along the highway and that some of them are certified organic, and herbicide drift could affect their organic certification. However, here in this community we have the Midlakes Community Coalition who has representatives from all the communities between Chamberlain and Dundurn. They have been working hard to develop tourism particularly along Highway 11 and have been instrumental in convincing the provincial government to call Highway 11 Louis Riel Trail. They have produced to their credit several historic monuments or sites featuring or depicting life prior to the opening up of the west to homesteading.

I live beside Highway 11, and have travelled the highway for over 50 years, and I have never seen a pesticide sprayer of any kind operating, or spraying pesticides on it. I find it unbelievable that you should decide on spraying Highway 11 to kill the weeds, particularly in a dry season like this one when every farmer close by is cutting every spear of vegetation to feed his cattle.

While travelling Saskatchewan highways in spraying season I find it obscene that the minister of tourism is promoting tourism and the minister of highways is going to spray the ditches of Highway 11 to expose tourists to toxic dangerous chemicals. Not only tourists travel the highway, but ambulances with sick people. Dr. Allan Cessna, of the National Hydrology Water Institute, Saskatoon, reports that during the first three months of pregnancy the fetus is very vulnerable to health problems from pesticides. How many pregnant women travel the highway particularly in the early stages of pregnancy? How many people with chemicals allergies travel Highway 11? Some people are so allergic to chemicals that they have to wear oxygen masks. Not only is the minister of tourism promoting tourism but many citizens are helping him. Many businesses along Highway 11 derive considerable revenue from tourism as well. However, I hope when spraying starts the department erects signs advising tourists to take an alternate route because Highway 11 is being sprayed with toxic pesticides at this time.

# 2 Concern - Telephone directory should be re-issued  
I recently picked up the new (2002-2003) Regina District telephone directory at Packet's Food Store in Davidson. Today when I started to write this letter I wanted to be sure I had the names of the ministers of highways and tourism. When I searched the government blue pages, Saskatchewan section, I was amazed that they no longer listed the telephone



numbers of the minister's offices. It would appear the Saskatchewan government no longer wants the public to communicate with minister's offices.

I couldn't find a listing of the premiers or any minister's office in the new telephone book. I don't expect the minister's name to be in the book, because they change from time to time, but every citizen should have a right to know the telephone numbers so they can communicate with any minister's office. I think you should reprint the Saskatchewan Government Information Section and mail them to all businesses and households. Otherwise it appears the premiers and ministers are hiding.

Elmer Laird, President  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

April 14, 2003 Davidson Leader

### **Important issues concerning food production**

Open letter to:

Holly Penfold, environmental campaign coordinator; Darrin Qualman, executive director, National Farmers Union and Arnold Taylor, president, SOD:

Re: GMOs, international marketing and food quality

I am writing to you about some of the issues about food production that you may not be aware of and would be of interest to the people you write to or who attend your meetings all over the world. From Feb. 2 to 9 I was on an organic farm tour of Cuba with 20 other people from Canada, the U.S., Germany and Ecuador and then stayed for another four days after the tour. The tour was organized and sponsored by MacQueens Tours of Prince Edward Island. Both the tour and my tour companions made the tour extremely interesting. I would like to draw your attention to some of the conclusions the tour helped me formulate.

#### **Food quality – organic versus chemical**

One day of the tour was a “free day” and we organized to have a lecture from German scientist Dr. Fritz M. Balzer from a leading research institute in Germany who was on the tour. (I can’t read German, so I am attaching a brochure he gave me with information about his credentials.) The brochure actually recommends a soil testing program which was unrelated to his lecture.

In his lecture he spent about an hour and a half explaining the details of the research he did to determine the nutritional value of organic produced crops and crops produced with chemical fertilizers and pesticides. He said unequivocally that organic food contained more nutrition than chemically produced food. This is the first scientist that I have heard say this although I have known it and believed it to be true for some time.

#### **What does this mean in the international marketplace?**

It would be surprising if any North American scientist would agree with Balzer, particularly here in Canada. Very few chemical farmers are aware of the fact that both our federal and provincial departments of agriculture promote chemical agriculture only. Research and extension people must go with government policy. Organic farmers are very aware of it because both governments only show token interest in organic agriculture by providing a minimum of services.

However, it does not matter from the point of the international marketplace whether or not our scientists will admit or recognize certified organic food as the most nutritious food. Dr. Balzer is in Germany, and he will be heard by far more Europeans in his support for organic agriculture than Europeans will hear the denial by Canadian scientists. This means that Saskatchewan and the rest of the Canadian Wheat Board (Manitoba and Alberta) area will no longer be able to claim that they produce the highest quality of wheat in the world unless we make a major switch to organic agriculture.

Only prairie grown certified organic grain can make the “high quality” claim today.

Organic cereal grains, legumes and flax are enjoying on average, twice the price of chemically produced food products. It would be good business practices for everyone to make the switch to organic, and it would be very important for the health of all Canadians and customers as well.

### **Other marketing challenges - the Canadian Wheat Board**

In my 55 years of farming (1946 to 2001) I have always been a strong supporter of orderly marketing through the Canadian Wheat Board and continue to be. However, there will be a problem of getting wheat board directors to recognize the nutritional value of organic grain.

The 10 elected Canadian Wheat Board directors are all chemical farmers, and like most other chemical farmers, they will not be prepared to admit that organic grain has a higher nutritional level than chemically produced grain.

However, this is no reflection on the fact they are elected. If they were appointed by the federal government, they would have to support the federal government’s policy of supporting chemical agriculture only. In fairness to the wheat board they did a survey and discovered that 60 per cent of their international customers rejected GMO grain.

### **GMOs - What isn’t being said by way of warning about GMOs by transnational corporations is more significant than what is being said.**

*1. Herbicide pollution* - GMO agriculture crops were developed because weeds were building up a tolerance to herbicides. The only way herbicide manufacturers could continue to sell herbicides to farmers was to genetically engineer a crop that would stand higher tolerances of herbicides so the crop would survive and the weeds would die. However, what isn’t being recognized is the fact that stronger herbicide will eventually destroy the productivity of the soil. The Manitoba Co-operator recently reported that Dole Pineapple had pulled Out of Hawaii because the soil had become polluted with nitrogen fertilizer and pesticides and wouldn’t grow anything.

Unfortunately, both federal and provincial governments are supporting GMOs and federal Public Affairs and wheat board minister Ralph Goodale and Premier Lorne Calvert are pouring money into the University of Saskatchewan at Saskatoon to make it the biotechnology capital of the world. Obviously, they are not concerned about the loss of markets as a result of GMO grains and oilseeds.

To demonstrate the provincial government’s lack of concern about GMOs, I must report on Murray Mandryk’s column in the March 28 edition of The Leader-Post. Mandryk reported that the provincial government was growing GMO potatoes on their now defunct SPUDCO irrigation project at Lake Diefenbaker. He reports the government sold the potatoes without telling the buyers they were GMO.

Mandryk, in his column, reported that “Agriculture Minister Clay Serby says the government didn’t bother telling anyone because they were not required to.”

*2. Plant characteristics* - Over the years scientists working for Agriculture Canada Research have developed rust resistant wheat, sawfly resistant wheat, wheat that will have higher milling quality, higher yields, wheat that will mature in fewer growing

days to reduce the risk of getting damaged by frost in our short growing season, and a number of other characteristics (some related to geographic areas).

N.B. The promoters of GMOs are not talking about (1) the increased risk of soil pollution from the increased strength of the chemicals and (2) will GMO wheat maintain the characteristics the Agriculture Canada scientists have developed over the years.

3. *Health safety* - Promoters of GMO products are always assuring citizens that GMO products are safe because scientists have tested them. Scientists are not able to test them for digestibility, allergies or other factors. The only way GMO food products can be tested is in the stomachs of the people who eat them and that can't be done unless they are labelled.

### **Fusarium dangerous**

Percy Schmeiser, whom you met at the NFU convention last fall, was talking to a Michigan researcher who said that if wheat was sown on soy bean stubble that had been sprayed with a Round-up Ready herbicide, it would have the plant disease fusarium the following year.

Cattle can eat a small amount of fusarium in grain but it is poisonous to people, pigs, chickens and horses. This is not surprising because no one to my knowledge is doing research on what pesticides are doing to the nutrition or to the bacteria in the soil or to the quality of grain produced. Manitoba farmers have some real problems with fusarium and so do Saskatchewan and Alberta farmers to a lesser degree.

### **No synergetic testing of pesticides**

In fact in about 1977- 1978 at the environmental conference in Fort Qu'Appelle sponsored by a number of Saskatchewan farmer organizations and financed by the Blakeney NDP government, we had Dr. W. P. McKinley, at that time head of the Health Protection Branch, Ottawa, as a guest speaker. I asked Dr. McKinley if anyone was doing research on the hazards or safety of the combination of chemicals that were being used in agriculture. His reply was no one.

He said that previous to that time, the topic had been raised on how to test for the synergetic effects of the combination of chemicals for their safety at the United Nations Food and Health Organization, and they decided that it couldn't be done. No one could afford to.

So the Health Protection Branch continues to test one chemical at a time and no one is testing the synergetic effects of pesticides on people, domestic animals, wildlife or the environment.

About that time a report came out that scientists were finding chemicals in the mouth of the Mississippi River that couldn't possibly enter the river on the way down so it was concluded that a new chemical must have formulated on the way down the river.

Our Health Protection Branch still tests one chemical at a time and there are hundreds of more chemicals on the market than there was in 1977-1978.

In fact they don't do the testing, they review the research the chemical corporation provides safety.

**Standing Committee on Environment recommends subsidizing organic agriculture**

Incidentally, the year 2000 report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development on page 184 recommends that all farmers should be subsidized to move to organic agriculture. In my opinion this is the route we should go.

**Saskatchewan water polluted**

Here in Saskatchewan, Dr. Allan Cessna, National Hydrology Water Foundation, reports that all of our surface water is polluted with herbicides and also one-third of our deep wells. Dr. Hanz Pederson, executive director of the Safe Drinking Water Foundation, reports that 23 per cent of all our illnesses in Canada are caused by our water as compared to 2.5 per cent in Holland. We have the highest rate of breast and cervical cancer and the second highest rate of prostate cancer in Canada. We use a third of all pesticides used in Canada and there is no doubt that pesticides are causing cancer. The PhDs in agriculture and medicine should be reporting on pesticides causing cancer, but the transnational corporations have them effectively tongue-tied. GMO grains and oilseeds mean more and stronger pesticides and water and food pollution will continue to increase.

**No records kept**

The Occupational Health and Safety office of the Saskatchewan Department of Labour records all farm accidents and fatalities, but does not keep a record of deaths and illnesses as a result of exposure to pesticides. This shows how powerful the chemical lobby is.

**Our battle continues**

In a recent conversation a few days ago Percy Schmeiser, Bruno farmer, told me about the researcher he had met from France in his travels. He said that the first attempt to take away farmers' rights to save their own seed was in 1871. Well, that is what the GMO battle is all about—corporations taking away our right to save our own seed and the Plant Breeders Rights Act of 1991 makes it all possible.

**Conservation not in Monsanto's vocabulary**

The corporate mentality says that everything should be financially exploited as long as possible and then when the project no longer shows a profit, move out as quietly and smoothly as possible. They never use the word "conservation". I hope this information will be useful.

Elmer Laird, president,  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

November 9, 1998 Davidson Leader

Continued from last week:

Open letter to:

Dr. Gilbert Norman, Secretary of State for Agriculture and Agri-Food  
Fisheries and Oceans  
Government of Canada

Dear Dr. Norman:

Re: Concerns about your speech to the 2nd International Conference on Women in Agriculture, June 28- July 2, 1998, in Washington, DC, USA.

Last week we described some of the financial problems and “family value” concerns of rural women as a result of the federal government’s cheap food policy. We also discussed the fact that you neglected to describe these concerns of Canadian rural women in your presentation to the 2nd International Conference on Women in Agriculture in Washington this summer attended by 1200 rural women from fifty countries.

Women have been traditionally responsible for the health of their families and rural women, because of their isolation, have had a particularly difficult role in many instances because of their isolation. The fact that the Canadian government is more interested in the survival of the transnational drug and chemical companies than they are of farmers and the family farm has created many health problems that will accelerate as time goes on. The federal and provincial governments seem completely oblivious to the health and environmental effects of chemical agriculture. In fact, the federal and all provincial departments of agriculture promote chemical agriculture only. Here in Saskatchewan we use more herbicides and pesticides than any other province. Spraying season lasts from early spring when the ground thaws out until “freeze up” in the fall. As a result, rural women are faced with the added challenge of raising a family in a polluted environment. It would appear that health costs are soaring at a rate equivalent to the increased use of pesticides. Health services are deteriorating at the same time which all adds to the stress load of rural women. Saskatchewan people rely on surface waters for a potable water supply and most of them are polluted with toxic herbicides. In addition, the provincial government is promoting corporate hog factories which will also contribute to water pollution. Often the rural woman is designated to haul the chemicals home in the farm “half-ton”. Her children have to be with her and she must keep the kids away from the chemicals. Many rural women are very worried every time their husband goes out to spray. The whole family is exposed to toxic chemical drift all during spraying season. We have been using toxic agriculture chemicals for fifty years and illness or death from exposure to toxic chemicals is still not “notifiable” under the Saskatchewan Farm Health and Safety Act. (The Minister of Health is presently considering it). As a result, there are no statistics on illnesses or deaths caused by exposure to toxic agriculture chemicals.

The Allergy Foundation of Canada reports that about 20% of Canadians have allergies and allergies are on the increase. Some people are allergic to the food itself but

others are allergic to the pesticide residues in the food and some to the food additives and preservatives. The rapid increase in the demand for certified organic food is evidence of the increase in food allergies. Breast, prostate and colon cancer rates are soaring and reports indicate they are higher in the farming population. Saskatchewan has an extremely high rate of multiple sclerosis. Many people in rural Saskatchewan with respiratory problems are confined to their homes during spraying season. A Danish study reported that sperm count is down fifty percent in the industrialized world as a result of pollution. Pollution is attacking our collective immune systems and lowering our resistance to disease.

It's amazing that the federal government has banned the advertising of tobacco for health reasons but has not considered banning of advertising of toxic pesticides. Nutrition is an increasing concern of rural women. As a result of an increased work load they are using more and more "prepared foods" where previously they cooked almost everything from "scratch" and retained the nutrition. Here in Saskatchewan, the provincial government has been promoting "value added" foods processing for several years. They never mention preserving nutrition, the purpose is to make more money. The "de-regulation" policy of the federal government is causing considerable stress. It is creating an environment where railroads, that are our main transportation system for grain, are being abandoned and torn up. Highways, grid roads and rural roads are rapidly deteriorating and the provincial government or rural municipalities do not have budgets to repair them. The de-regulation policy is opening our telephone, natural gas and power facilities to competition which is creating great insecurity in the rural community because of the possibility of increased rates that we can't afford to pay or reduction in service. The combination of "cheap food" and "de-regulation" policies is causing a feeling of great uncertainty about the future of our rural communities which were already threatened.

Under the "de-regulation" policy, the federal government is rapidly abandoning its responsibility for food protection and food safety. It is turning this responsibility over to the transnational corporation. Press reports recently are starting to tell the public about the turmoil in the Health Protection Branch of the federal government and public confidence in Canada's food supply is dropping rapidly.

In Saskatchewan we have been mining uranium, natural gas, oil and coal since World War II. In addition, we have been using toxic pesticides, herbicides and other agricultural chemicals for about fifty years. However, we still do not have a faculty of environmental studies at either of our universities. Many students graduating from university are completely unaware of the pollution hazards of the world they live in. As a result, journalists do not have any background in understanding environmental hazards, they do not ask politicians (like you) questions about pollution. A recent study shows the food in the parliamentary restaurant of the House of Commons, where both politicians and journalists eat, has pesticide residues in the food. It should be receiving as much publicity as the APEC fiasco, but there is no mention of it in the daily press. Medical doctors like yourself should also be taking classes in environmental studies so they could understand what is happening to their patients.

Well, Dr. Norman, it is obvious the only stable growth industry we will have in Saskatchewan in the foreseeable future is the Farm Stress Line operated by Saskatchewan Agriculture. I hope in the next issue of "Farm Women's Bureau News" you tell rural

women what policies your department is introducing to address some of the concerns of rural or farm women.

Elmer Laird, President  
Back to the Farm Research Foundation



April 23, 2003 Davidson Leader

Open letter to David Chanasky, registrar Agriculture Institute of Canada and Glen Hass, registrar, Saskatchewan Institute of Agrologists,

RE: 1. The ever worsening economic and environmental crisis in Canadian agriculture.  
2. Will transnational corporations continue to take increasingly more control of the family farm?  
3. Who will the Saskatchewan and Canadian agrologists support — the transnational corporations or the family farm.

N.B. I am attaching a five- page letter published in the April 22 edition of The Davidson Leader. The letter is to Wheat Board Minister Ralph Goodale, CWB president and CEO Adrian Measner, CWB chairman Ken Ritter and CWB director Ian McCreary. It sets out in detail how prairie chemical farmers will be faced with lower and lower prices as a result of increasing pesticide pollution of our soil and food if we follow the GMO route of food production.

Your membership holds most of the key positions in our federal and provincial agriculture departments in Canada. The *Saskatchewan Agronomist Act* of 1947 gives agriculture graduates exclusive rights to do agricultural extension work (I assume all other provinces have similar legislation). Reports I have read indicate that 15 per cent of your members are employed by pesticide companies. The Agriculture Institute of Canada and its provincial affiliates in my opinion are the most powerful lobby group in Canada.

Certified organic farmers are very aware of the fact that except for a few token organic programs both federal and provincial governments support chemical agriculture only. Certified organic volunteer farmer organizations have been attempting for the last 12 or 15 years to get the federal government to introduce a national mandatory organic certification standards that would be compliant with International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM). This is necessary to permit the marketing of organic products outside of Canada. Closer to home our Back to the Farm Research Foundation was certified under the United States Department of Agriculture in 2002 and also will be in 2003. This is a very sad state of affairs for all of agriculture.

On the historic day of Sept. 11, 2001, the Prime Minister's Task Force on the Future of Agriculture stopped here at the farm. Representatives of the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate and the Canadian Organic Certification Co-operative Ltd. were present. MP Wayne Easter, now Solicitor General of Canada, admitted that the federal government had done nothing for organic agriculture previous to that time. It hasn't changed since.

Agriculture chemicals were developed for biological controls in the First and Second World Wars. Then some clever entrepreneur figured out a way to introduce them into agriculture. As far back as 1940 Monsanto knew that 2,4-D contained dioxin and that dioxin causes cancer, however, they proceeded with their introduction of 2, 4-D and spent large volumes of money advertising to convince both academics and farmers they were on the right road. I sprayed for 20 years (1949- 1968) and except for grasshoppers, spraying season then lasted for a couple of weeks in June.

Now it continues from the time the frost is out of the ground to freeze up. Saskatchewan citizens are (and I expect other Canadians are too) exposed to toxic chemical drift seven to eight months a year. In addition to that exposure we are exposed to pesticides in our food and water 12 months a year.

This is what our extension services are recommending. Our health-care system is in a crisis. Transnational drug and chemical companies are doing very well. They sell us toxic pesticides seven months a year that make us ill and they sell us drugs 12 months a year that are supposed to cure us. Today more and more people are concerned about pesticide pollution of our air, water and food, particularly mothers and grandmothers, who are worried about what the future will be like for their children and their grandchildren.

Most of your older members grew upon family farms. For a long time agriculture colleges only accepted students from farms. Now it is no longer necessary to have a farm background to enter agriculture college. Until last fall, we didn't know if the chemical lobby was controlling the agronomist organization and they were establishing federal and provincial government policy regarding pesticides or the chemical lobby was controlling politicians and they were establishing the "chemical only" agriculture policy. However, last fall at the "Water Conference" in Saskatoon in early October, the following book was being distributed supporting GMO production: *Transforming Agriculture The Benefits and Costs of Genetically Modified Crops* by Murray Fulton, Hartley Furtan, Dustin Gosnell, Richard Gray, Konstantinos Giannakas, Jill Hobbs, Jeff Holzman, William A. Kerr, Jodi McNaughton, Jan Stevens and Derek Stovin.

Some of the authors of the book are high-profile academics at the University of Saskatchewan, but no one used their academic credentials after their names. Perhaps they were presenting a minority report and don't represent the Institute of Agrologists. They were apparently not concerned about the pollution of pesticides that would be used with GM crops or the pollution of other crops by GMOs.

Does the fact that we don't have any agriculture colleges in Canada graduating students in organic agriculture reflect the bias of the Institute of Agrologists? A report out of Ottawa on the CBC Radio news April 22 said registration of grains in the future would be made on a scientific basis, market value would no longer be considered. Farmers obviously have lost that battle and their right to save their own seed is certainly being threatened by the transnational corporations.

We frequently hear about alcohol, drug and gambling addiction. More recently addiction counsellors are considering chemical or pesticide use an addiction. It has been thought of to date in terms of chemical farmers but perhaps it might apply to your members, particularly the ones that grew up on chemical farms and graduated in chemical agriculture. The federal government signed the Kyoto Agreement last fall. Many taxpayers and consumers are expecting the agriculture community to clean up its act.

Perhaps it is time we met together and discussed solutions to our environmental and health problems. I would welcome the opportunity and I know other organic farmers that would welcome the opportunity too.

Elmer Laird, president,  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

September 20, 2004 Davidson Leader

### **Continued use of pesticides could threaten wildlife**

Open letter to Darrell Crabbe, executive director of Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation

Re: Pesticides a threat to wildlife

Seventy-four year old professor of biochemistry, Dr. Wee-Chong Tan of the Lester B. Pearson International University of Victoria, B.C. says, "If we don't quit using pesticides at an ever-increasing rate, we will destroy the productivity of Canadian soils and the same thing applies to soils in the rest of the world as well."

Thank you for sending me a copy of your environmental policy. I don't see any concerns about the health of wildlife expressed in your policy as a result of ever-increasing exposure to the pesticides we are using. I think the era is not far off when we will finally realize that Mad Cow disease in cattle, chronic wasting disease in antelope, deer and elk and Alzheimer's in people are all a result of the ever-increasing use of pesticides over the last 50 years. As a result of increased use of stronger and more toxic pesticides and herbicides, people, domestic animals and wildlife are exposed to more and more of them. If the soil quits producing, it means disaster for us all.

Dr. Tan came to Canada 31 years ago to set up the Chinese section of the Lester B. Pearson International University on Vancouver Island. Since his retirement, he has travelled all over the world visiting organic farms and has written a series of articles supporting organic farming as a biochemist.

Pesticides were developed in World War I and II for the purpose of biological warfare. They really have no place in agriculture, and we have lost over 50 years of time in developing biological controls for weeds and pests and other innovative ways of farming.

In the first few years of using pesticides particularly for grasshopper control and herbicides for weed control, spraying season usually lasted for three weeks at the end of June or the first week of July. Today, spraying season lasts from when the ground thaws out in the spring until it freezes up in the fall. It is possible that wildlife that are grazing in any cropping area will never get a bite of grass or field crops that don't have pesticides on them from early spring right through the era of desiccated crops prior to harvest and on to fall control of weeds. Prior to the era of zero tillage, wildlife might escape on to the summerfallow fields and graze there for a while, but with zero tillage there are massive areas of the province that are frequently being sprayed and no place for wildlife to escape to.

Dr. Allan Cessna of the National Hydrology Water Institute has reported that all surface waters in Saskatchewan are polluted with herbicides and also one-third of the deep wells. Surface water is the main source of drinking water for all wildlife and obviously, it's all polluted with herbicides.

I have never heard of any studies that would indicate that wildlife could detect pesticides in their drinking water and look for sources with lesser amounts. I did hear of a study on wild birds years ago that said, "there were more birds on organic farms than chemical farms."

The RCMP head dog trainer at their office told me a few years ago that he would be able to train dogs to detect pesticides if there were any in certified organic food in warehouses or stores. I don't know if Mother Nature has any way of making wildlife aware of the hazards of their constant exposure to pesticides. Do you?

The press has a lot of stories these days about someone who is distributing poisoned dog food that is killing dogs in a Saskatoon park. I'm sure if the individual is found, they will be prosecuted. However, the Christian Churches of Canada have not yet decided that poisoning (God's) soil with toxic pesticides and herbicides is a sin. However, none of the governments of Canada (federal or provincial) have decided that it is illegal to poison our soils, air, water and food with toxic pesticides. German scientists are now telling Europeans that organic food unequivocally is more nutritious than food produced with agricultural chemicals. No one here in Canada, academic or otherwise, has apparently reached that conclusion to date. Even nutritional experts interviewed on television or radio programs never mention the importance of certified organic food in the diet of Canadians.

What does this polluted food and water do for the nutritional needs of wildlife? Here in Saskatchewan we have the highest rate of breast and cervical cancer and the second highest rate of prostate cancer in Canada. We also use a third of all pesticides used in Canada, and I know that pesticides are causing cancer and many other illnesses. We also have over one-third of the cultivated acres (43 percent) in Canada. Do you know how pesticides affect the health of wildlife?

I sincerely hope that the 25,000 in your organization will soon become involved in a program to promote organic farming and reduce the use of pesticides. I hope to have a meeting with you on the topic.

Elmer Laird, president Back To The Farm  
Research Foundation

# Factory Farming

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April 26, 2004 Davidson Leader

## **Time to move to healthy food production**

Presentation to: Peter Prebble, Minister of Saskatchewan Water; David Forbes, Saskatchewan Minister of the Environment; and Mark Wartman, Saskatchewan's Minister of Agriculture & AgriFood

I am pleased to have this opportunity to present each of you with a loaf of nutritious certified organic stone ground whole wheat bread. The flour was milled at Gerridwen Farms, Box 1 16, Medstead, Sask., SOM 1W0. The wheat was produced by organic farmer Barry Haubold, Glenbush, Sask. (We have an extra loaf for Clay Serby too. Cancer patients need organic food as do pregnant women and mothers of newborn infants). The bread was baked in the bakery of Packett's Grocery Store in Davidson, on April 22. Bread baked from certified organic stone ground whole wheat flour is the most nutritious bread product we have in Saskatchewan or anywhere else in the world.

In late November 2003, Peter Prebble and I separately attended the National Farmers Union convention in Saskatoon. Peter and I are long time friends and share many environmental views. He was there as a speaker, and I attended as a visiting founding member of the NFU.

We had a discussion about hog factories at the convention. He was using the podium mike and I was on the floor mike. On that occasion I told him that factory farm produced pork was loaded with growth hormones and antibiotics, the hogs were raised in filthy conditions and that I would never eat factory farm pork. I asked him what food quality standards the government had. He said we have environmental standards, but we don't have any food quality standards. I sincerely hope this will be the beginning of the Saskatchewan government adopting food quality standards.

When I was a director of the Canadian Organic Producers Marketing Co-op Ltd., Girvin, Sask. (1986-1991), I attempted to sell certified organic stone ground flour to the restaurants at the College of Agriculture, the Saskatchewan Legislature, the Providence Hospital at Moose Jaw and the House of Commons. To my knowledge the House of Commons is the only one of the above who has some organic items on the menu.

Today, it is unfortunate that even though we are spending billions of dollars on education and research in the province and our universities are graduating PhDs in agriculture and medicine, we still don't realize the nutritional value of certified organic stone ground flour.

We would welcome an opportunity to meet with you to discuss establishing food quality standards in Saskatchewan. I hope our provincial government soon starts to look at the nutritional value rather than volume of production or profit per acre.

Our health care system is getting on very shaky ground; however, it must be built on a foundation of clean water, pure air, certified organic nutritious food and a clean

environment or it will go broke. It has already started. Here in Saskatchewan we have the highest rate of breast and cervical cancer and the second highest rate of prostate cancer in Canada. We use one-third of the pesticides used in Canada, and I know they are responsible for not only causing cancer, but a lot of other illnesses. The PhDs in agriculture and medicine won't tell you this because of the powerful chemical lobby.

Well, gentlemen, I hope you are prepared to look at the political implications of this issue. The mothers and grandmothers of this nation are very concerned about the polluted world their children and grandchildren are growing up in. The women across Canada are organizing under the banner of Beyond Factory Farming. They want to have top quality food and a clean environment.

Meanwhile, politicians (mostly male) are playing useless political games while the environment becomes increasingly more polluted. It's like men going out on Saturday night to drink and play poker and leaving the wife home to look after the kids under impossible environmental conditions.

I am proud to support the women who are leading this organization. What are you prepared to do?

Cathy Holtlander is moderator of the Beyond Factory Farming Project, set up by the Council of Canadians in seven of the 10 provinces. In early April she made the following statement about Factory Farming on national CBC Radio. She said:

*“2004 -Avian influenza: 19 million chickens to be killed in British Columbia’s Fraser Valley.*

*2003 – BSE: 2,700 cattle slaughtered in Western Canada.*

*2001 - Hoof and mouth disease: over four million sheep and cattle put down in the United Kingdom.*

*I detect a pattern. I’ve done some math and I think I’ve found the formula: Maximized production plus minimized costs minus small producers and processors multiplied by centralized markets and processing plants equal perfect conditions for a contagious disease to spread like wildfire.*

*Avian influenza is not an unusual disease; chicken farmers have to deal with it from time to time. This particular chicken flu outbreak is a crisis only because of the concentration of poultry production in the Fraser Valley.*

*The Canadian Food inspection Agency’s veterinarians now believe the virus is spread by chicken industry workers go from farm to farm. It’s the “efficiency” of having lots of poultry operations in close proximity that has turned a problem into a crisis.*

*In the past, dairy and beef were raised in the Lower Mainland. The manure was used to fertilize the hay. Now, poultry dominates, but their feed is imported and the concentration of manure in the Valley is at the top of the scale in Canada. The Abbotsford Aquifer frequently exceeds drinking water guidelines for nitrate contamination.*

*British Columbia is proposing new meat inspection rules. The costs for compliance will be too high for most small abattoirs, so they will close. Areas that now produce their own chickens will have to start importing from the Fraser Valley, making the concentration there even worse.*

*In the aftermath of this massive cull, there’ll be a chance to make a new start. Do we want to recreate the conditions for a disease epidemic? Should we rely on high-tech bio-security measures, a “gun registry”-style central database for all livestock,*

*elimination of small producers and processors, and further mechanization and concentration of the industry?*

*Or, is there another way?*

*Dispersed, regional production and processing is the best defense against epidemics. Problems can be isolated and contained with far less dislocation.*

*Local production and processing in smaller urban centres would provide livelihoods for people in nearby rural areas and minimize greenhouse gas-emitting transportation.*

*We have an opportunity right now in British Columbia. Let's rebuild by providing incentives for chicken farmers to get small and get out of the Fraser Valley."*

Saskatchewan has lots of space, about one-third of the cultivated land in Canada. We have an opportunity to grow and market healthy animals and poultry. When are we going to start?

Elmer Laird, president  
Back To The Farm  
Research Foundation

February 16, 2004 Davidson Leader

### **Feedlot encouraged to use environmental methods of feeding**

Open letter to Phil Sanden, president Riel Trail Cattle Feeders Inc.

Thank you for sending me a copy of the first edition of the Riel Cattle Call. I know there is really no relationship, but I thought and hoped after Craik's start on its Eco-Centre as part of the Sustainable Living Project, your new organization might be Riel Trail Organic Feeders Inc. and your newsletter would be entitled Riel Organic Cattle Call.

I know all the cattle along the original Louis Riel Trail were organic and continued to be organic until the development of antibiotics about the beginning or during World War II.

You are no doubt aware of my bias toward organic production and I hope that my criticisms of your project will be accepted as friendly advice.

I doubt that very many cattle producers at this time would accept the fact that the Mad Cow Disease (BSE) that was found on the Alberta farm may be (and I think it is) a blessing in disguise.

1. The Jan. 26, 2004 edition of Maclean's Magazine has an eight-page article entitled *Taninte Food* by journalist Danylo Hawaleshka that describes in great detail how the market or demand for certified organic food and particularly organic beef has grown since May 20, 2003 when we found out about Mad Cow Disease in cows.

2. I deliberately used the term "in cows" in the last paragraph. The Dec. 4, 1997 issue of the *Western Producer* carried an article "CJD: Cruetzfeldt Jakob Disease" by journalist Joan Eyolfson Cadham. The story she wrote is about the death of a 27-year-old resident of Wynyard, Sask., who died the previous May 12, 1997 of CJD. I am not publishing the individual's name because his wife and family do not want the publicity. Since then I have received reports of other people in Saskatchewan who have died of CJD. This individual was in the Royal University Hospital in the spring of 1997, his illness was diagnosed as CJD and was sent back to Wynyard to die. At the time the editor of the *Manitoba Cooperator* told me he wouldn't publish the story because he didn't want to start a panic. However, if we have a disease in our province as fatal as Mad Cow Disease, we must recognize it and start taking remedial action to prevent further deaths. (I will supply you with copies of the articles I am referring to.)

3. The Council of Canadians has appointed Kathy Holtslander of Saskatoon as project organizer of their Beyond Factory Farming Coalition project. They have offices in most provinces including Quebec. They are opposing all types of factory farming and particularly hog houses. Following is a list of organizations that are supporting them:

Association for the Preservation of the Bouctouche Water Shed (I don't have space to describe all the organizations, but will supply it), Canadian Labor Congress (2.5 million members), Canadian Organic Growers (National Organization), Citizens for the Environmental Future of Eastern Ontario, Grace Factory Farm Project, Hogwatch Haldimand, Hogwatch Manitoba, Hogwatch Ontario, National Farmers Union, Regina Humane Society, Roseisle Creek Watershed Assoc., Saskatchewan Federation of Labor, Sierra Club of Canada, Society for Environmental Livestock Operations, Concerned



Citizens for a Safe Healthy Environment, Concerned Citizens of North Glengarry, Concerned Citizens of Thames Centre, Concerned Citizens of the Municipality of Kincardine, The Council of Canadians, County Regional Environmental Evaluation Coalition, Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario, Stop The Hogs Coalition, Union Paysanne, Back To The Farm Research Foundation.

Please note: All of the above organizations are opposed to hog factories and feedlots because of the pollution, working environment and the quality of meat, particularly the antibiotics and growth hormones in meat.

Perhaps you should talk to Sam Rhodes, Livelong, Sask., president of the Canadian Organic Livestock Assoc. (COLA), they have been doing research on certified organic markets in Quebec and Europe and they report there is a great potential for certified organic beef.

#### 4. An article in the March

2001 edition of the Agriculture-Environmental paper Acres USA entitled "Insecticide Causes. Mad Cow Disease" by journalist Fintan Dunne, reports on British organic farmer Mark Purdey in England who challenged the British scientists on their analysis of the reasons for Mad Cow Disease. Purdy says "Pesticides cause both Mad Cow Disease and Alzheimer's disease." One of these days we will finally publicly recognize that pesticides cause Mad Cow Disease (BSE) in cattle, chronic wasting disease in elk and deer and Alzheimer's disease in people.

I know it is possible to produce healthy cattle without antibiotics or growth hormones. (Half of the antibiotics used in Canada are used in livestock and poultry production) I grew up on a farm south of Swift Current, Sask., in the 1930s before we had antibiotics or pesticides. I went out to work when I was 16, my father continued on with cattle a few more years. In that 20- year period, I remember horses getting sick and dying, but never a cow. Cattle by nature are very healthy animals if left in their natural environment. Cattle need space and here in Saskatchewan we have more space than they have anywhere in Canada. Let us make use of it for both livestock and poultry production.

The consumer has many allergies, some are to antibiotics, some to hormones in the meat and some are to pesticides.

I hope you seriously consider developing an environmental method of feeding cattle. Incidentally, by the way the price of organic beef has not dropped since May 20, 2003 when the first case of Mad Cow Disease was diagnosed in that cow in northern Alberta.

Remember, the consumer is the person you need to please. He who pays the piper calls the tune.

Elmer Laird, president, Back To The Farm  
Research Foundation

April 24, 1995 Davidson Leader

Come “Hell or High Water” the drug and chemical companies Monsanto and Eli Lilly seem, from this writer’s point of view, determined to ram Bovine Growth Hormone (rBGH) into the Dairy Industry and the stomachs of all Canadians who drink cow’s milk. The Federal Government is an accomplice in this assault on food safety, animal welfare and our country’s agriculture sector. rBGH (often referred to as BST) is a growth hormone injected into cows to attempt to increase the milk supply by 25%. This is being done at a time when there is no shortage of cows or milk in Canada. Monsanto and Eli Lilly appear tube ready to distribute their product into other countries including Canada under the cover of GATT’ (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) and NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement).

Canada’s Minister of Agriculture Ralph Goodale, has caved in to pressure from the transnationals and the US, which last year, amid much controversy, approved the drug. Although he is striking a task force, its mandate and composition may, in fact, largely reflect expectations laid out by Monsanto and Eli Lilly.

At the same time as the task force is playing out its charade, Health Canada is carrying out a parallel process that can independently approve rBGH. And because Goodale only sought a promise from the transnationals to withhold sale of the drug for one year - rather than a legislated moratorium - until July 1995, cows could be on rBGH - even if serious problems are confirmed.

Journalist Alex Boston in an article entitled “The First ‘Frankenfood’ Genetically Engineered Milk” published in the April 1995 edition of the health magazine “Alive: The Canadian Journal of Health and Nutrition” discusses the animal and health risk of BST/ rBGH. He said “Cows on rBGH suffer from a higher incidence of udder infections, reproductive disorders, lameness, burn-out and premature death. John Shumway, a New York farmer with 200 cattle, reported in August, ‘I’ve lost a quarter of my dairy herd.’” Every time he injected them with rBGH, 20 more cows would experience excruciatingly painful udder infections.”

Many cows injected with BST/ rBGH suffer from mastitis and the drug and chemical companies then have an opportunity to sell more drugs to treat the cows. In April 1994, the Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture recognized the potential risks of recombinant bovine growth hormone. The all-party committee unanimously recommended that the Canadian government legislate a one year moratorium on use, giving time to carry out further studies and develop legislation to deal with the rapid advance in biotechnology. The moratorium is in effect until June 30, 1995. Many Canadians are opposed to BST/rBGH.

Farmers, consumers, public interest groups, students, environmentalists, health professionals, animal welfare groups, women’s groups, organized labour and NGOs – all across Canada people and organizations have been petitioning the Liberals to avoid a public health crisis, defend the agricultural community, protect animal welfare and stand up for Canada’s sovereign right to protect its food security and develop its own health and safety standards. A joint lobby of 60 organizations calling for a legislated moratorium was coordinated by the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy and the Council of Canadians.

Kathleen MacMillan, President of the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, explains, "There have been absolutely no long-term health studies. Allowing this product into the marketplace amounts to a human experiment. The long-term health effects, especially on women and children, the primary consumers, will not be known for a very long time."

The health magazine "Alive: Canadian Journal of Health and Nutrition" is working hard to create a public awareness about the BST/rBGH issue. They published an article and a petition form in their January 1995 issue, protesting the legislation. They report in their April 1995 edition they already have received 50,000 signatures on the petition. In the United States, Monsanto has set aside a public relations budget of \$500 million to get BST/rBGH approved by the U.S. Government and accepted by the public.

What can we do here to protect the quality of the milk supply. The January and April editions of "Alive" are available at the Public Library for anyone who wants further information. The National Farmers Union is circulating petitions across Canada. Copies will be available at the office of the Davidson Co-op for signatures. There will also be extra copies for anyone who would circulate them in surrounding communities. When signed all will be returned to the NFU Office for their presentation to Minister of Agriculture Ralph Goodale.

January 13, 1997 Davidson Leader

Open Letter To:  
Premier Roy Romanow  
Wheat Pool President, Leroy Larsen  
Health Minister Eric Kline  
Agriculture Minister Eric Upshall

Gentlemen:

Re: The program of the Saskatchewan Government and the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool to increase annual hog production by 1,000,000 head or from the present 934,000 (Statistics Canada figures) to 1,934,000 hogs.

Question 1: Has it ever been done successfully? The answer is yes. In 1939 when World War II was declared the total number of hogs on Saskatchewan farms was 615,200 (Statistics Canada). The "Bacon for Britain" program was launched and by 1943 the total number of hogs on Saskatchewan farms had increased by three times to 1,840,000. (1941 census shows 138,713 farms and 1991 census reports 60,840 farms in Saskatchewan.) The increase in production was accomplished before we had hydroelectric power, running water and artificial heat on most farms. Front end loaders were not available on farms at that time and there were a few farm grain elevators but no grain augers. Antibiotics were not used in livestock production and a few farmers had manure spreaders. There were no reports of pollution of potable water supplies from hog production. The pork was of "premium" quality. The method of production was labour intensive, energy efficient and environmentally friendly. There were no odours from the stench of hog house lagoons drifting for miles across the countryside.

Question 2: Have there been programs to increase hog production since World War II? The answer is yes. The Ross Thatcher government (1964- 1971) decided to promote hog production to use up surplus grain. In 1964 the hog population in Saskatchewan was 544,000. Thatcher promoted hog production by providing a 20% grant for the cost of constructing hog houses to encourage farmers to build them. It was the first overall introduction of what has become known as "confined" or "factory" hog production in Saskatchewan. Farmers thought they would profit from producing large volumes of pork at a small margin of profit with minimum labour. The product was not of a very good quality and many farmers raised "a few hogs on the side" for their own use. Many farmers become discouraged, some went bankrupt before they finished building their hog houses. The hog houses turned out to be a fire hazard and many burned down. In fact, so many burned down that fire insurance companies finally refused to pay fire claims unless the hog house was rebuilt for at least the original cost. Many farmers found the disgusting odour of a hog barn where hogs are confined unacceptable, gave up hog production and converted their barns to machine storage sheds. However, hog production had almost doubled by 1971 when it peaked at 1,040,000 but it had dropped back to 501,000 by 1977 where it had been in 1964 before the program started. Hog production varied from 500,000 to 700,000 over the next ten year period from 1977-87 and has

gradually increased since then to 934,000. The Thatcher hog production promotion program was not a success.

Question 3: Can hog production be increased by 1,000,000 hogs? The answer is yes. However, it can't be accomplished by using the "confined" or "factory" method of production because antibiotics have become obsolete for livestock production. A 1995 edition of the Humane Farming Association published a report by the National Academy of Sciences (American). It said:

*"Factory farming would not be possible without the routine use of antibiotics and other drugs. Only with drugs can animals survive the overcrowding, stress and severe deprivation.*

*As reported by the National Academy of Sciences, 'The practice of feeding livestock a wide variety of antibiotics at subtherapeutic levels has become commonplace as producers have adopted confinement [practices]... The widespread use of antibiotics has reinforced a trend not to manage for disease prevention but rather to accept the costs of antibiotic feeding as a routine production expense.'*

*Agribusiness drug companies dismiss the dangers inherent in the pork industry's reliance upon pharmaceutical chemicals. Public health scientists, however, are greatly concerned about harmful drug residues in pork and other factory farm products."*

*The December 26, 1996, edition of the Leader Post carried an article on the editorial page by journalist Tomas Land with a date line London, England. Mr. Land said, "Alarmed by the worldwide spread of an antibiotic-resistant super-bug, microbiologists in Canada and many other countries are trying to persuade the European Union to put human health before free trade by banning a wisely used medical agent from agricultural use.*

*The initiative involves such authorities as Julian Davies of the University of British Columbia, Stuart Levy, director of the centre for drug resistance at Tufts University, Boston, and Wolfgang Witte of the Robert Koch Institute in Wernigerode, Germany.*

*Germany and Denmark have already imposed temporary bans on the use of the agent avoparcin, manufactured by the Swiss-based multinational company Hoffmann- La Roche, because it closely mimics the behaviour of two vital antibiotics--vancomycin and teicoplanin - humanity's only remaining defence against an otherwise drug-resistant bug invading many hospitals."*

*Land continued, "Scientists fear widespread agricultural use of the drug may lead to a similar process in the hospital environment, making the super-bug Staphylococcus aureus resistant to all antibiotics known to medicine."*

*Land said, "Britain's Public Health Laboratory service is calling for sweeping restrictions of antibiotic use in animals in order to protect the public from the rise of drug-resistant super-bugs. The service, which monitors disease patterns through its national laboratory network, says key antibiotics must be reserved for human use alone if the population is not to be left defenceless against drug-resistant bacteria."*

Elmer Laird  
Back To The Farm  
Research Foundation

January 20, 1997 Davidson Leader

Open Letter (Continued From Last Edition) To:  
Premier Roy Romanow  
Wheat Pool President, Leroy Larsen  
Health Minister, Eric Kline  
Agriculture Minister, Eric Upshall

Gentlemen:

Re: The Program of the Saskatchewan Government and Saskatchewan Wheat Pool to increase annual hog production by 1,000,000 head by the year 2000, or from the present 934,000 (Statistics Canada figures) to 1,934,000 hogs.

Question 1: Has it ever been done before successfully? Yes, the "Bacon For Britain" program tripled hog production in Saskatchewan from 615,200 (Statistics Canada) in 1939 to 1,840,000 in 1943.

Question 2: Have there been programs to increase hog production since? Yes, the Ross Thatcher government (1964-1971) promoted hog production. It increased hog production from 544,000 in 1964 to 1,040,000 by 1971. By 1977 hog production had dropped again to 500,000.

Question 3: Can hog production be increased by 1,000,000 by the year of 2000. The answer is yes, but not by using the "confined" or "factory" method because antibiotics are required. Antibiotics are obsolete for livestock production.

Question 4: Are there health, safety, water and air pollution concerns when producing hogs using the "confined" or "factory" method? Yes, a Farm Health and Safety Research Centre at Minneapolis, Minnesota, reported several years ago on the health hazards of modern hog barns. They said that working in a "factory" type hog barn was the most hazardous farm occupation there is. In fact, it was even more hazardous than operating a farm sprayer. There is fecal dust from the facility, dandruff from the hogs and ammonia gas from the liquid manure in the storage lagoons. All are very hazardous to the lungs of humans. They are also hazardous to the lungs of hogs but the life expectancy for a market hog is only six months. However, sows need to live longer depending on the number of litters they raise. Humans are expected to live "three score and ten". If antibiotics were not used on a regular basis in a hog barn, hogs would experience many lung problems.

Question 5: Is the intensive hog barn development environmentally friendly? Mrs. Ellen Francis, organic farmers and environmentalist from Silver, Manitoba, reports on the development of some such hog barns in Manitoba. She says an area company owned by non-resident share holders is promoting large hog barns. It is an area where there is a high "water table", porous fractured limestone beds and gravel ridges and deposits. There are many cottage owners in the area who rely on surface water for potable water supplies and recreation. The hog barn lagoons that contain the liquid manure may be poorly constructed, frequently leak, effluent from the lagoons is sloppily handled, spilled on municipal roads, it runs down municipal ditches, frequently spread on the snow to wash

away with the spring run-off. It is spread on the land far in excess of the rate commercial nitrogen fertilizer would be used and far in excess of what the crops can use so there is little doubt it leeches into the water table. Manitoba environmental regulations are almost non-existent. Company lawyers might intimidate rural municipal councils threatening to sue them if they don't issue construction permits. Company owners and shareholders do not live in the community and therefore are not exposed to the pollution and stench of liquid manure the same way farmers on neighbouring farms are. As soon as a barn is built in a community property values drop because no one wants to live on a farmstead next to a hog barn.

Question 6: Is livestock waste a problem in other places? Yes, Mr. Robert W.P. Jannen of Heiloo, Holland, was a buyer of organic grain who visited the Canadian Organic Producers Marketing Co-op. Ltd. at Girvin in 1987. He said "Holland has ten million people, we have more cattle than people and more hogs than cattle. We have a high water table, we don't know what to do with all the manure. We are loading it on barges and shipping it to other countries for fertilizer." Dave Reibling of Tavistock, ON, an organic farmer and grain buyer reported on a visit to Quebec a few years after Premier Rene Levesque established a program where the province paid a premium on all hogs to encourage production. Reibling said rivers, -streams and shallow wells were all being polluted.

Question 7: Are there concerns about factory livestock operations here? Yes. The National Farmers at their last national convention in Saskatoon in December, 1996, expressed grave concerns. They are concerned about water and air pollution and will be asking provincial governments across Canada to monitor farm wells for pollution.

The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, now that it has gone public and is a corporation with shares being traded on the Toronto Stock Exchange, will obviously be the first Saskatchewan corporation to take control of livestock production away from the family farm in the new program.

Elmer Laird, President  
Back To The Farm Research Foundation

January 27, 1997 Davidson Leader

Open letter (continued from last two editions) to:

Premier Roy Romanow  
Wheat Pool President Leroy Larsen Health Minister Eric Cline  
Agriculture Minister Eric Upshall

Gentlemen:

Re: The program of the Saskatchewan Government and the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool to increase annual hog production by 1,000,000 head by the year 2000 or from 934,000 (Statistics Canada figures) to 1,934,000.

In the first two editions we discussed the 1939-1943 "Bacon for Britain" program, the "Ross Thatcher Hog Program" 19M-1971, the ineffectiveness of antibiotics in the "confined" or "factory" system of production, the health and safety effects on workers and hogs in the factory system, pollution problems from hog barns in the Interlake region of Manitoba, pollution problems from livestock in Holland and Quebec and concerns of the National Farmers Union regarding Sask Wheat Pool exercising corporate control of family farms (continued).

Question 8: Where are hogs produced in large volumes in an environmentally friendly manner? China is very successful. In the early 1970s the National Farmers Union sponsored several tours of China for their members. Fr. Phillip Loehr of St. Peters Abbey, Muenster, joined the 1972 tour.

He said, "The Chinese with a population in excess of 1.25 billion people to feed are masters of sustainable agriculture. They have to be. They make use of all animal and human waste for fertilizer and have been doing it for 8000 years." Another member of the tour said, "In a rural area where population density was over 5,000 per square mile (one section) there were more hogs than people. The hogs were kept in the back yards. Hogs are very clean animals if they have an opportunity."

Question 9: How should animal manure (waste) be used in an environmentally friendly and useful way in Saskatchewan? Ms. Joan Harrisson, Saskatoon Biologist with the Saskatchewan Waste Reduction Council, says "Manure is the most unappreciated valuable resource we have. It is really needed here in the Palliser Triangle where we have a very fragile ecosystem. In fact, a lot of the land should never have been cultivated. Manure when it gets into the water system is a pollutant, when it is properly returned to the soil it becomes a nutrient. Animal manure should to water erosion, nutrients will be composted and spread on the land, particularly on the knolls or higher places in the field." She said, "Composting kills weed seeds, stabilizes the nutrient content, is not subject to water erosion, nutrients will be released over many years. Composting also destroys soil borne plant disease and reduces volume. Many home gardeners are successfully composting all their leaves, grass clippings, vegetable vines, kitchen refuse and successfully returning all the nutrients back to the soil." However, she only knew two farmers who were composting in Saskatchewan. They were Glen Ekert, Wapella, and Allan Penner, Morse. The Moose Jaw Exhibition Board has a composting project and so



does the Prince Albert River Bend Farm (Federal Penitentiary). Harrison said, "Liquid manure from hog barn lagoons doesn't have the right oxygen-carbon-nitrogen mix. The fact there is an excess of nitrogen is what causes the stench."

The Saskatchewan Waste Reduction Council is prepared to hold workshops anywhere in the province on garden, farm or municipal composting. Unfortunately, neither the College or School of Agriculture teaches composting.

Question 10: Is composting of manure from hog barns a practical solution? Yes, Larry Janzen is a member of the Seager Wheeler Historic Farm Society Inc. He is a "zero till" farmer who owns a 100 sow hog barn in the Rosthern area. Janzen says that he thinks it is possible to design a hog barn so the manure can be removed mechanically and composted. Composting would eliminate the need for a lagoon to hold liquid manure. This would eliminate the stench or the really offensive odours from the community.

Question 11: Are there other considerations? Yes, 1) Economic Development Minister Dwain Lingenfelter has promised to create 30,000 jobs by the year 2000. 2) Mr. Williams, CEO of Tourism Saskatchewan, will no doubt want to promote tourism in rural Saskatchewan, i.e., country vacation farms, bed and breakfast farms, camping, hiking, biking, bird watching, historic sites and provincial and regional parks. The stench from liquid manure at a hog barn will certainly be in conflict with the enjoyment of his programs. 3) It is both sad and ironic that Saskatchewan Wheat Pool which became the largest grain handling co-operative in the world as a result of the cooperative efforts of its members is promoting hog barns which divide every rural community they are built in. 4) In the last seventy years both the Saskatchewan Pool and all Saskatchewan governments have supported the "family farm". This hog barn program will be the first major step to make way for the corporate takeover of family farms.

Question 12: Should the proposed hog production program proceed? Yes, Saskatchewan has lots of space, a highly skilled rural community, unemployed people and an ample supply of grain. However, priorities should be changed to: 1) creating rural jobs, 2) developing good working conditions for the hog barn staff, 3) composting all hog waste and returning it to the soil, 4) producing high quality pork, 5) removing the Sask. Pool's corporate control of the family farm, 6) designing a hog house that will maximize all the priorities listed above and 7) making the rural community an environmentally friendly, healthy place to live, work and visit.

Sincerely,  
Elmer Laird, President  
Back To The Farm Research Foundation

March 31, 1997 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:  
Mr. Doug Ball, CEO  
Board Members of Midwest Health District

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen:

On January 13, 1997, I wrote an "open letter" to Premier Roy Romanow, Agriculture Minister Eric Upshall Health Minister Eric Cline and Wheat Pool President Leroy Larsen. The letter was about the history of the hog industry in Saskatchewan since 1939 and it contained recommendations on how to double the population in an environmentally friendly manner.

On February 3, 1997, Mr. Cline wrote, thanked me for the letter and said Agriculture Minister Eric Upshall or a designate would answer it. On February 19, 1997, I wrote to Mr. Clime as follows:

*"Dear Mr. Cline:*

*Thank you for your response to my letter to the Premier, Mr. Larsen, Mr. Upshall and yourself. I am not prepared to accept your non-committal response where you passed the letter onto the Minister of Agriculture to answer. I am sending the letter back to you.*

*In the letter I raised two questions that are your responsibility to answer in my opinion. They are:*

*1. Pollution of water wells. The Provincial Laboratory is under your jurisdiction and you are responsible in the final analysis for water quality in Saskatchewan even though you don't test rural water samples for pesticides.*

*2. Overuse of antibiotics. Press reports indicate that half of the antibiotics used in Canada are used in livestock and poultry feed. Medical doctors are on the air daily talking about the overuse of antibiotics. When are you going to start reserving antibiotics for human consumption?*

*There are also grave health concerns about the effects of hog houses on the lungs of both workers and hogs. However, Occupational Health and Safety is under the Minister of Labour. You only have to be concerned after the workers experience permanent lung damage and are using up Medicare dollars."*

I received the following letter from Mr. Clime dated March 11, 1997:

*"Dear Mr. Laird:*

*Thank you for your letter regarding health-related issues that may arise from a planned expansion of hog production in Saskatchewan. I am pleased to provide you with information I hope will be helpful in answering the questions you have raised in your letter.*

*As you will know, applications for intensive livestock operations in the province need to be made through the Department of Agriculture and Food. Upon receipt of an application, numerous agencies, including the respective health district, can be asked to review and provide comments regarding the application. I think it is important to explain that during the review process, Agriculture and Food is responsible for ensuring that the operation of the facility will not pollute ground or surface water. Saskatchewan Health*

*operates one of the laboratories for the testing of water in the province and with the exception of the far north does not become involved directly in private water quality issues. Health districts can become involved when water supplies become contaminated and in such cases the district works collaboratively with other departments such as Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management, the Water Corporation and Agriculture and Food. In cases where contamination may be the result of livestock operations, the health district works closely, with the lead agency which is Agriculture and Food.*

*You have mentioned the overuse of antibiotics. I should explain that the use of antibiotics in animals that form part of the food chain are administered by the Food and Drug Administration of Health Canada. It is my understanding that in most cases, the types of antibiotics used with animals differ from those that people use. For specific information regarding this topic you may want to write to: Dr. Patricia Dowling, Veterinary Pharmacologist, Western College of Veterinary Medicine, 52 Campus Drive, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, S7N 5B4.”*

Press reports indicate there is going to be some “hog house” development in the Outlook area. The Minister of Health is obviously abdicating his responsibility for any environmental pollution that may result from hog waste pollution. He doesn’t explain what the Midwest Health District’s responsibility is in relation to any other kind of pollution, i.e. chemical spills, etc. He says, “Upon receipt of an application, numerous agencies, including the respective health district can be asked to review and provide comments.” He doesn’t say you will have an opportunity to review and reject the proposed developments if the Health District Board is of an opinion it is a threat to the health of its citizens. However, the facts are, in the final analysis, Health District will be responsible, along with a number of other government agencies, for the damage. The question is—if a farmer neighbouring the community experiences pollution from hog house waste, who does he sue?

If I were living within five miles of a proposed hog house development I would immediately get my water tested to protect my interest. I think the Midwest Health District should develop a protocol to make sure water quality in the area is protected before the development takes place. A few years ago all community water supplies were tested by the Saskatchewan Research Council for toxic chemical residue. This government abandoned the testing as an economy measure. Pure unpolluted water is fundamental to our “wellness” program.

Elmer Laird, President  
Back To The Farm  
Research Foundation

July 21, 1997 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:  
Mr. Doug Ball, Chief Executive  
Officer  
Dr. Troy Herick, Medical Health  
Officer  
Ms. Jill Shanks, Director of Health  
Promotion  
All of Midwest District Health

Dear People:

Re: Bylaws that will be required by Midwest District Health to protect the health of people residing in the district from health hazards created by mega-hog barns.

In continuation of my letter of July 14, 1997, when it was not known if health districts had the authority to pass bylaws, I urged that health districts take steps to acquire that "right" in order to function like other local government administrations. At that time we proposed and gave supporting evidence for the following two bylaws:

Bylaw #1. All employees of mega-hog barns must take a "Lung Functioning Test" before going to work in mega-hog barns and every six months following the beginning of their employment.

Bylaw #2. All employees of mega-hog barns must attend an "occupational safety" workshop to understand the hazards and pass a written exam to demonstrate they understand the health and safety hazards.

This week we are proposing:

Bylaw #3. All water wells and dugouts within a five mile radius of a proposed mega-hog barn must be tested for nitrates before construction and every six months following construction.

An article by journalist Karen Briere in the July 10, 1997, edition of the Western Producer reports on 189 water well tests carried out by the PFRA in Saskatchewan. Recently Ms. Candace Vanin of the federal Prairie Farm Assistance Administration told a seminar of health workers that high levels of nitrates were found in water wells in many parts of the province. She said, "*In the Moose Jaw area almost 80 percent of the wells exceeded the maximum acceptable concentrations for nitrates and other districts had similar results: Kindersley-Leader, 68 percent; Lloydminster, 59 percent; Estevan, 48 percent and in other districts, 40 percent.*"

*"High levels of nitrates are not safe for infants or young children. Children under the age of one, in particular, are at risk. Cattle can also be poisoned by consuming water and feed containing nitrates at a rate of more than 100 parts per million."*

*"In the Saskatchewan study, 32 percent of the wells exceeded the maximum acceptable concentration of 45 parts per million. The highest concentration detected was 780 parts per million."*

She went on to say, "*Greater numbers of livestock facilities like feedlots are found at the areas with poorer quality water.*"

*“Nitrates do occur naturally through the decomposition of organic matter. If plants do not use the nitrate, it seeps below the root zone and will move downward where it can become concentrated in water. Once a well is contaminated steps must be taken to eliminate the nitrates or the problem will get worse.”*

*“There are about 48,000 privately owned wells in rural Saskatchewan, and approximately 45 percent of residents drink ground water.”*

Nitrates in ground water can only come from two sources, manure or nitrate fertilizer. Apparently dugouts were not tested for nitrates or pesticides.

Bylaw #4. Sample testing of water wells and dugouts for pesticides must be carried out in Midwest Health District every year. Ms. Vanin reported on pesticide pollution in the water well test. She said, *“Pesticides were detected in nearly half the wells tested in the Outlook- Davidson area, 45 percent near Estevan, 35 percent in Moose Jaw, 27percentin Fort Qu’Appelle-Ituna, 19 percent in Lloydminster, 10 percent in Kindersley-Leader and just 2 percent in the Yorkton-Melville area. The provincial objective is zero tolerance.”*

It should be noted that laboratory tests for pesticides are very expensive and very few individuals will spend that amount of money. However, for the Midwest Health District in their Wellness Program it would be money well spent on health research of hazards.

Bylaw #5. Only spraying effluence on soil surfaces from hog barn lagoons should be permitted and only in the early growing season.

The “injection” system of pumping hog lagoon waste into the soil has been banned. Mr. Ron Dalmyn, a retired engineer and private researcher from Winnipeg, told the R.M. Council of Elton (at Douglas, MB, east of Brandon), *‘By spraying lagoon effluence over the surface of the soil, the ammonia evaporates and radiation (sunshine) will kill most of the bugs (parasites, bacteria, eggs, etc.). However, the injection system cuts down ammonia losses (still 30 to 40 percent) and the sunshine can no longer destroy the bugs and eggs, some of which can now survive for years.’* He said, *“The right time to put or lagoon effluence on or into the ground is before growing season. Not whenever the sewerage lagoon happens to be full.”* Dalmyn warned, *“For people working in mega-hog barns, the average time to catch a respiratory disease is five to seven years, for smokers the risk shortens to three to five years. The hog industry has finally acknowledged that hogs, too, have respiratory diseases and, in some instances, are cross-infectious.”*

He said, *“Because of health hazards many Americans refuse to work in hog barns. Mexicans, for decades a labour force that wanted to work, even illegally, in the United want no part of working barns. There are now prisoners working in U.S.A. hog barns.”*

The World Health Organization recently reported that *“twenty-five percent of the illness in the world is caused by environmental pollution”*. It is very important to recognize the sources of pollution and start cleaning them up. If we don’t, the health care will continue to soar and in the not too distant future will no longer be affordable.

Elmer Laird, President  
Back To The Farm  
Research Foundation

July 7, 1997 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:  
Premier Roy Romanow  
Agriculture Minister Eric Upshall  
Environment Minister Lorne Scott  
Wheat Pool President, Leroy Larsen

Gentlemen:

Re: Proposal to increase wild boar production to meet increased market demand for pork with a low cost and low investment and with an environmentally friendly method of production.

Manz's Wild Boars was established by cousins Tory and Glen Manz in 1993. They each invested a very minimal amount of cash in the company. They bought four sows and three bears and invested \$1,000 in fencing. The Wild Boar enterprise is part time. Tory is a salesman for John Deere and Glen is a tire repairman at James Tire, both businesses located in Davidson. They now have a herd of sixty hogs, sixteen sows, one boar and forty-three feeders. They market their wild bears when they will "dress out" at eighty pounds. The meat is high quality, low fat and low cholesterol.

They are raising their wild bears in an older, well treed farm yard. The only building required is the granary they use to store their feed grain in. The wild bears are outdoors the year round. For protection they stack straw or alfalfa bales inside the hog fence under the trees. The hogs burrow into the bales and organize their own housing where they give birth to their young unaided. In the winter time drinking water is not required, they eat snow. The wild bears are immune to customary hog diseases so no medication is required. They eat alfalfa, clover and other hay crops and low value grains, i.e., tough or damp, low grade cereal grains or screenings. Hogs are fed once a day. No artificial heat is required and there isn't any unbearable stench to bother the neighbours or even human beings living in the same farm yard. There are no health hazards for the operators or workers. The Manz's Wild Boars operation is successful in every way but they are unable to expand due to their limited land base.

This method of production stands out in sharp contrast to the mega-hog barns promoted by the Saskatchewan government and Sask Wheat Pool. The mega-hog barns have a high investment cost, health hazards for labour and the hogs, high water demand, need for expensive medication and an unbearable stench or odour.

Ron Dalmyn of Winnipeg refers to himself as a retired, concerned senior citizen and a private researcher. He was a construction superintendent and sewer and water contractor plus a sewage plant distributor. In a presentation to the R.M. of Elton (at Douglas, Manitoba, east of Brandon) on June 9, 1997, opposing the "Conditional Use Permit" for a 3,000 sow farrow to nursery livestock operation by "Elite Swine", he said (in reference to the mega-hog barn development in Manitoba), "*And now the government and the hog industry are surprised that they have to reap what they sowed. They talk about employment. But they caused about 5,000 real hog farmers having to quit.*" Dalmyn said, "*The mega-hog barn promoters are saying that manure odour is just a*

*nuisance. The facts prove the (Manitoba) provincial government, the pork industry and the 'Normal Farm Practices Protection Board' are wrong. For the people working in the barns, the average time to catch a respiratory disease is five to seven years. For smokers working there, the risk span shortens to three to five years. The hog industry had to acknowledge that hogs too have respiratory diseases. They told us: 'Don't worry, it doesn't affect the quality of the meat'. But they don't tell us that these diseases are cross-infectious."*

*"Because of that, in the USA lots of Americans now refuse to work in the hog barns. Mexicans, for decades a labour force that wanted to work even illegally in the USA, want no more part of working in hog barns. There are now prisoners working in hog barns."*

*"When you can smell hog manure odours, you have to understand that aerosols (air borne) bacteria are present. Think of legionnaire's disease."*

Dalmyn went on to say, *"For the last couple of years, we have been informed that asthma is on the rise, especially in children. While the hog industry brags that there are ammonia losses from hog manure lagoons and application of hog manure, they conveniently ignore the fact that ammonia losses contribute to the greenhouse effect and global warming, plus they create acid rain."*

*"Also, a combination of ammonia and pesticides (millions of flies have to be killed), increases the susceptibility to asthma fourfold."*

It should be noted that the R.M. Council of Elton rejected the project.

The most important question in the long haul is, "Who is going to buy and eat the pork from the mega-hog barns?" Consumer groups like the Humane Farming Association (P.O. Box 3577, San Rafael, California, 94912) are taking a wide range of actions to prevent "confined production" of livestock because they are concerned about cruelty to animals, particularly hogs and "day old" dairy calves. They are a well-financed lobby group and can very easily lobby Canadian consumers, particularly the overseas ones, to boycott "confined livestock" products.

It is time, Mr. Premier, to re-evaluate your hog expansion program. There are at least a million wild poplar and willow bluffs in Saskatchewan that would provide housing or protection for a hog enterprise like the Manz's Wild Boars project here at Davidson. Premier Ross Thatcher's similar policies to expand pork production in the 1960s failed. Obviously, yours will too.

Government support at this time for low cost, environmentally friendly hog production would also put a halt to the "corporate takeover" of Saskatchewan farms.

Elmer Laird, President  
Back to the Farm Research Foundation

# THE FARM CRISIS AND FOOD SECURITY

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March 2000 *alive* #209

## Food Crisis

Farming is in a crisis, particularly here on the Western Canadian prairie. Everyone is calling it an economic or financial crisis in agriculture. However, the problem is more than finances, so I will call it a "system crisis." The agriculture system is not working.

The Saskatchewan government—supported by a number of farm organizations—has asked the federal government (Canadian taxpayers) for a one billion dollar subsidy or bail out for Saskatchewan farmers. If the Canadian taxpayer is going to come through with the money, then it is time consumers voiced their opinion about the kind, quality and security of the food supply.

Saskatchewan has 43 percent of the cultivated land in Canada—with only a million people, or 3.3 percent of the population. We are not able to feed ourselves; line-ups at the food banks are getting longer and these include farmers. Our food, water and soil are polluted with toxic chemicals all year long and are becoming more polluted. Spraying season pollutes our air seven months of the year. But billions of taxpayers' dollars are spent on research and training agrologists in chemical agriculture.

Transnational drug and chemical corporations pressure farmers to move to genetically-engineered (GE) products that require increasing amounts of toxic chemicals. They want complete control of agriculture so they can make huge profits from toxic chemicals. Meanwhile, the chemical agriculture policies lead to increasing amounts of pollution and illness.

## The Future is Now

Europe is refusing to buy our GE canola. Japan will start labelling canola in 2001. Australia is shipping large volumes of non-GE products to Europe and getting our former markets. Europe does not buy our beef because we use growth hormones and antibiotics. We have a high-tech agriculture that is losing markets because of consumer concerns about polluted food. We have lost many traditional markets because of food quality.

Farmers are going bankrupt and leaving the farms. Our small towns are disappearing. In many instances, both husband and wife are working off the farm to pay the farm bills. They are driving an average of 80 kilometres one way to work everyday. The demand on our farm stress phonelines is rapidly increasing. There are no programs to train young people to farm. Our health costs are soaring and waiting lists for health services are



rapidly growing. This is certainly not a foundation for a stable food supply for our nation.

Press reports indicate that it cost \$750 billion to provide computer security in North America for the new millennium. Others say the cost was \$750 billion worldwide. However, nothing was mentioned about food security. The 1996 census reports there were 28,846,761 Canadians—all of whom are consumers of food. At the same time, there were 276,550 farms.

I have been organic farming for 31 years in one of the drier areas of Saskatchewan. I know from experience that it is the only kind of farming (if done properly) that will rebuild the depleted soils, clean up the environment and provide healthy nutritious food for Canadians and our customers abroad. It will help meet Canada's commitment to the Kyoto conference to reduce greenhouse gases.

I would like to appeal to all Canadian food consumers to start lobbying farmers directly or through your church, school, municipal government, sports, labour or community development organization. Tell farmers that you want them to grow or produce the healthiest food possible—particularly if they want subsidies.

March 4, 2002 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:

Charles Hubbard, MP and chairman,

The House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

In your closing comments at the public hearing at Davidson you said that if we would like to add any comments or information, we could write to your committee. I have few further concerns I would like to express.

### **1. Present State of Saskatchewan's Economy and Culture**

Here in Saskatchewan we have over 40 per cent of the cultivated land in Canada and about one million people or 3.3 per cent of the population. We have high-tech chemical agriculture. Both federal and provincial governments are presently devoting practically all of their research and extension money to chemical and biological agriculture and we still can't feed ourselves. In fact our growth industries are agriculture chemical sales, cancer and food banks. Line-ups at food banks are getting longer, farmers are driving up to 70 miles to food banks and there is a demand for more food banks in rural areas.

Saskatchewan uses one-third of the pesticides used in Canada. We have the highest rate of breast and cervix cancer in Canada and the second highest rate of prostate cancer. In my opinion, it is obvious pesticides are causing cancer. The powerful transnational drug and chemical companies have very effective and powerful lobbies. Unfortunately, PhDs in health and agriculture are dominated and intimidated by their public relations departments. Health and agricultural scientists are unable to effectively advise our citizens about the hazardous environment we live in.

Fortunately, Dr. Allan Cessna of the National Hydrology Institute (federal environment) is the only one who is vocal and has been reporting for some time that all of our surface water is polluted with herbicides and about one-third of our wells. Surface water is our main source of potable water here. Both Regina and Saskatoon and many other smaller communities rely on surface water. Here at Davidson last year we had four cases of infant cancer which was unheard of 10 years ago. If we continue chemical agriculture, our Saskatchewan Medicare system, which costs have rapidly increased up to \$2,000 per year per capita, will soon be unaffordable.

### **2. Agriculture in Both Economic and Environmental Crisis**

Agriculture economist Jack Slater, University of Saskatchewan, told a Davidson audience a couple of years ago about the large number of farmers who are working "off the farm" to help pay the operating costs so they will not lose the farm. In many cases it is both husband and wife who have off-farm jobs. He said they were driving an average of 50 miles a day one way to get to their jobs.

Agriculture pesticides are obsolete—both weeds and pests are building up resistance to them. *The Western Producer* last spring reported that 22 weeds are resistant to herbicides in Canada and 400 worldwide. In my presentation to your committee at Davidson, I told you about the war that is going on between organic farmers and the transnational drug and chemical companies for the control of the family farm. If the

government would rescind their *Plant Breeders Rights Act*, family farmers would have a chance; if not, there will be more polluted water, food and air.

### **3. Terrorism**

In my presentation to your committee on the morning of Feb. 19, 2002, I told you about the class action suit between the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate and the transnational corporations Monsanto and Aventis and the weapons of war are GMO canola and wheat. I reported on how Robinson Investigations are acting on behalf of Monsanto. I said, "They inspect farmers' fields for Round-up Ready canola without farmers' permission. They drop chemical bombs on farmers' fields to determine the variety of canola (Round-up Ready or not)."

The Liberal government of Pierre Elliot Trudeau gave us *the Charter of Rights and Freedom*. While this was happening his Minister of Agriculture Eugene Whelan was promoting the *Plant Breeders Rights Act* which was passed into legislation by the Mulroney government. This act is a violation of not only farmers' rights but also the rights of all Canadian citizens to have democratic control of agriculture. If the *Plant Breeders Rights Act* isn't rescinded soon, some unhappy farmer sooner or later is going to shoot down a spray plane that is dropping chemical bombs on his property without his permission. Then all hell will break loose. I believe this comes under the banner of terrorism. Don Robertson, our vice-president, and I are veterans of World War II, and this is not the freedom we fought for.

Rescinding the *Plant Breeders Rights Act* should have been part of the terrorism bill the government passed before Christmas. If the transnationals ever get control of the seed, it will create a real opportunity for a company to supply terminator seeds, seeds that won't grow at all or even under extreme conditions, inject a very destructive gene that would be dangerous to human or animal health. The safest place for the nations seed supply is in farmers' bins, Canada agricultural research centres or universities. I think your committee should take a serious look at terrorism in relation to family farms and transnational corporations and GMOs.

### **4. There are no Challenges for Young People to Farm**

There is great concern about young people leaving the province because there are no opportunities here. Everyone is worried about the financing of technical schools and universities but unfortunately, there is no interest in training young people to farm. The average age of farmers in Saskatchewan is 59 years. If we don't do something soon, who will farm?

Organic farming is a very challenging occupation. The challenge is to understand the characteristics of all plants (crops or weeds) and their relationship to each other. If we are going to have food for future generations, I think your committee should study ways and means of providing challenges and opportunities for young people to go into farming.

We once had self-sufficient communities. Homesteaders who settled this country were family farmers. They quickly learned how to survive in this climate where crops are exposed to frequent droughts, frost, hailstorms and grasshoppers. Transnational corporations would not survive. If they get complete control, the prairies will soon be abandoned as a disaster area like the Sahara Desert. It was once a fertile plain too. (See the book *Our Plundered Planet* by Fairfield Osborn, published by Boston, Little, Brown and Company of Toronto 1948). Only family farmers whose livelihood is tied to the soil

have the management ability to avoid disaster. Transnational corporations do not have management ability. We need policies to restore our communities by saving the family farm and to have an opportunity to produce certified organic food for our communities, our nation and our international customers.

We are looking forward to your report.

Elmer Laird, president,  
Back to the Farm Research Foundation

December 4, 2000 Davidson Leader

Consumers are an endangered species, and I include farmers in with the consumers. If they want certified organic food and a clean environment, they will have to start a revolution from sea to sea to sea.

The farm community is in a crisis in more ways than one, particularly here in Saskatchewan. We have large numbers of small protest groups that to date other than saying they want more money have failed to identify the problems of agriculture. They are divided on the chemical issue.

Historically farm organizations have rapidly increased in numbers in times of crisis although apparently that will not happen this time. The National Farmers Union, who can trace its roots in Saskatchewan back to the Territorial Grain Growers of 1901 (before Saskatchewan became a province), has not responded in this particular crisis as it has in the past. The NFU founding convention of 1969 brought together provincial farm organizations from across Canada except Quebec.

I attended the founding convention in Winnipeg with 2,400 other delegates and visitors of which 600 were from Saskatchewan. The NFU is the only direct dues paying voluntary farm policy organization in Canada that has a national charter and constitution. President elect Roy Atkinson told the 1969 convention they should be concerned about corporations taking over and controlling the family farm.

Atkinson was partly right. However, the transnational drug and chemical companies were well on the way to taking over the family farm then by getting farmers hooked or addicted to using toxic pesticides and herbicides. Pesticides and herbicides were actually developed in the First and Second World Wars for biological controls for warfare. Some smart entrepreneurs decided to see if they could apply them to peace time uses. They were extremely successful. Two generations of Canadians have grown up on chemical farms and chemical farming has become a part of our culture. Some farmers go organic if they get sick while spraying, however, others continue to spray their crops by employing custom operators.

Spraying season used to last for two to three weeks in June but now lasts for seven months from the time the ground thaws out in the spring until it freezes up in the fall. Chemical companies spend millions of dollars on advertising to convince farmers to use chemicals and then add it to the price of the pesticides. Unfortunately, in effect the farmer pays for his own brainwashing. The rest of society pays in terms of lots of illness and soaring health costs.

Health Costs should not be measured in dollars only. What of the pain and discomfort of the people who suffer while being treated for long illnesses.

What is the cost to families who have to drive long distances, carry extra work loads and lose work time. Cancer is a growth industry in Canada and the growth has certainly accelerated in the last 50 years since we started using toxic pesticides. There is little doubt that toxic pesticides cause cancer. For example, grandmothers in this district tell me that five babies have been diagnosed with cancer in this community in the last year. (Grandmothers are very interested and concerned about the health and wellbeing of their children and grandchildren.) One was born with cancer and had to have surgery shortly afterwards. Unfortunately neither Occupational Health and Safety of the provincial department of labour nor Statistics Canada keep statistics on the numbers of

people who are hospitalized or have died as a result of their exposure to toxic pesticides. Everywhere you turn there is a major cover-up of the dangers and effects of toxic chemicals.

We are in a stage of accepting the effects of the pollution of toxic chemicals as normal. It reminds me of a story I heard when I was on an agricultural study in Ghana and Nigeria in West Africa from 1964 to 1965. Staff at the Canadian High Commission at Accra, Ghana told me about an isolated tribe on the Volta River in Ghana where there was a bug that caused blindness and everyone went blind at about 18 years of age. They thought that was normal and the reason you raised children was to guide you or lead you around. We are in that stage in our acceptance of toxic pesticides.

Health costs in Saskatchewan was \$2,000 per capital last year. Line ups at medical clinics are getting longer and we are in a health crisis. If we don't clean up our environment and produce healthy (certified organic) food, our national health care program will go bankrupt.

Agriculture chemicals are obsolete. In fact they always were, however, weeds and pests have both built up a resistance to most of them. This has led to increased volumes used at accelerated cost. Saskatoon lawyers tell me that farmers are going bankrupt because they can't pay their chemical bills.

On the other hand, the stories coming from across the American border report that the reason that half of the American farmers who go broke is because they can't pay their medical bills. Farmers here are divided over chemicals. The majority of them have such a chemical dependency that they will very likely go broke before they switch to organic. By this time you are going to say, "Good, let them go broke." However, that will not be a good solution for the consumer.

The Mulroney government passed the *Plant Breeders Rights Act* in 1991 which gave the transnational chemical and drug companies the right to patent seed and control it. Farmers no longer have the right to save their seed from year to year. If this situation continues, the corporations will be completely taking over the farms and then consumers will have more polluted food than ever at a higher cost.

Today the federal and all provincial governments have policies to promote chemical agriculture only. Saskatchewan spent only 0.48 per cent of its last year's budget on organic agriculture. Consumers, as taxpayers, are paying the huge cost of the government promotion of chemicals. Consumers, including farmers, must unite and press governments at all levels for a balanced agriculture, health and environmental policy.

Chemical farmers need support to make the transition to organic agriculture. The October 2000 edition of *Organic Food Business News* published at Altamonte Springs, Florida, reports that the U.S. government is going to spend \$10 million in 15 states to help farmers make the transition to organic agriculture. The funds will be limited to \$50,000 per farm.

Closer to home, the May 2000 report of the Standing Committee on Environmental and Sustainable Development of the House of Commons entitled *Pesticides, Making the Right Choices* recommends on page 184, "Tax incentives for organic agriculture". It also recommended an interim support program.

Consumers must take drastic and co-ordinated action to support the above policies if they want to save their national health care program.

November 16, 1998 Davidson Leader

Michail and Juliann Sorotski live on a farm sixteen miles north of Davidson and eleven miles east of Kenaston. Sorotski is sixty-two years old and has farmed for forty years. He has been reeve of the RM of McCraney for eighteen years. The Sorotskis “zero-till” their five and one-half sections of land, owning four and one-half sections and renting one section. They have been seeding all their acres for about twenty years. The Sorotski’s son, Darren; daughters, Glenda and Sheree; and son-in-law, Greg Fertuck; have their own land but are a part of the overall farming operation. In 1998 Sorotski had 3,500 acres in crop and enjoyed an impressive yield but not an impressive income.

He produced 17,000 bushels of canola which yielded 22 bushels per acre and is worth \$7.90 per bushel; 15,000 bushels of white spring wheat that yielded 47 bushels per acre and is worth \$1.68 per bushel; 30,000 bushels of hard wheat that yielded 32 bushels per acre and is worth \$2.50 per bushel; 30,000 bushels of making barley which yielded 51 bushels per acre and is worth \$1.74 per bushel; and 15,000 bushels of peas which are worth \$3.50 per bushel. The total farm gate price for Sorotski’s 1998 production is \$339,200.00 or \$3.17 per bushel. He says he needs to average \$5.00 a bushel to pay farm costs and living expenses. He said, “Why don’t you write a column on what goes wrong?” I said, “Do you want to know the brutal truth?” He said, “Yes.” (This discussion went on while we were both enjoying our second helping of apple pie and ice cream and the Camber/Whitehead wedding reception on Saturday evening, November 7, 1998 at the Catholic Parish Hall, Davidson.)

There are two kinds of farmers. There are the farmers who actually work the land and then there are the farmers who farm the farmers. They are the transnational drug and chemical companies, the farm machinery and truck manufacturers, the railways and line elevator companies (which now include the Sask. Wheat Pool and UGG), the chartered banks, the oil companies, The Winnipeg Commodity Exchange, The Chicago and Minneapolis grain exchange, and millers and food processors.

At the founding convention of the National Farmers Union in early August, 1969, President-elect Landis, SK, farmer Roy Atkinson warned the 2200 family farm delegates and visitors from across Canada that the transnational corporations may take over the family farms. Looking back, I think the “take-over” had already started. Instead of using legumes in crop rotations and manure to rebuild the soil we were already chemically dependent in agriculture and chemical dependency has rapidly increased ever since. I also think the transnational corporations would own the land now if it was to their advantage. However, as long as farmers are prepared to work all day off the farm to finance the farm the transnational companies are getting maximum returns. If they owned the land they would have to hire staff and there would be less profit for them than there is now. Farmers are highly skilled in agriculture technology and would demand a high rate of pay. Western farmers traditionally since before the turn of the century have worked together in times of crisis. However, they don’t seem to be able to stand prosperity.

The NFU maintained their strong policy influence until the mid 1980s when all of a sudden “prosperity” meant borrowing large amounts of money to buy out their neighbour and the “competition” philosophy between farmers emerged again. Farmers started saying they had to compete with other farmers and they forgot the only way they had ever accomplished very much over the years was by working together. The NFU present

membership has dropped to 3,200 members which is only 10% of its charter membership. Many of the farmers who went on a borrowing spree went bankrupt and lost out in the long run. There is little doubt the "high interest rate" era was engineered by international and national investment brokers; they can't make money with stable prices.

About ten years ago the federal government passed the *Plant Breeders Rights Act*. It gave companies the right to do plant breeding and patent the seed. Prior to that Canadian farmers and federal government plant breeders worked together to produce grains, oil seeds and legumes the consumer wanted. Canada enjoyed an excellent reputation for food quality in the national and international market place.

Today transnational drug and chemical companies dominate the kind of crops that are grown and are promoting a wide range of genetically engineered crops. Europe completely rejects genetically engineered crops - Japan takes them under protest. The drug and chemical companies that sell the seed and pesticides don't care about Canada's reputation or whether the product is sold or not. Their main interest is selling the seed and pesticides and herbicides to farmers.

On Tuesday, October 20, 1998, CBC host Colin Grewar interviewed Craig Boljkvac of the World Wildlife Fund, Ottawa. He reported that pesticide residues were found in the food in the cafeteria on Parliament Hill where press and politicians both eat. Obviously the federal government is not taking any action because they are more interested in the survival of the chemical industry than they are the family farm.

Certified organic farmers are the only farmers who are producing the quality food the consumer wants. I sold certified organic spring wheat this summer for the Canadian Wheat Board price plus a \$2.00 per bushel premium, Radley green peas for \$10.00 per bushel and if I get my flax harvested it will sell for at least \$18.50 per bushel, more if it has a high oil content. Consumers are tired of being warned about the possibility of E-coli 0157:H7 in their meat and salmonella in their eggs. People with chemical allergies can't eat food off the supermarket shelves. Consumers want safe, healthy, nutritious food.

What is the solution to the present farm crisis? I don't know the answer but I know where the answers can be found. It can be found in the collective wisdom of farmers (men, women, young people) in a strong farm policy organization where farmers work together to solve their problems. We already have one nationally chartered grass roots farm policy organization in Canada.

Thousands of family farmers have put a lot of effort, time and money into building the National Farmers Union. We might as well use it. We are in the geographic area of the National Farm Union Local 614. It will accept members from the RMs of Ann River, Wiiner, Loreburn, Rosedale, McCraney and Rudy. In fact, we have twenty-seven paid up family memberships in Local 614. The national convention starts on December 3, 1998, in Saskatoon. We are entitled to one delegate for every twenty members or major portion thereof. If we had four members we could send two delegates to the national convention. In fact, there is an opening for president this year as the current president, Dr. Nettie Wiebe, is retiring. If you don't like the present policies, work with others to change them. Farmers have always worked together since prior to the turn of the century for social justice and a fair market price for their products. It worked before and it will work again. If family farmers are going to survive they must speak with a united voice on farm policy.



February 22, 1999 Davidson Leader

Open letter to Rex Murphy, host of CBC's program "Cross Country Check Up"

Dear Mr. Murphy:

Thank you for coming to Humboldt, Sask. for what we consider your "first" broadcast on "The Farm Crisis".

We didn't expect you to resolve the farm crisis but it would be very useful if you did a complete introduction to the question. It is true you did provide a forum for quite a number of farmers, farm leaders and Saskatchewan's Agriculture Minister Eric Upshall to "air" their economic concerns.

They were explaining why taxpayers through their governments should subsidize the farming industry. However, you did not provide an opportunity for consumers or taxpayers to "air" what they expect in terms of nutrition, food quality and environmental protection from the farming community.

Furthermore, there was no discussion on genetic engineering and terminator genes. It is to be hoped that you will do at least one more program to discuss consumers and taxpayers' views on what quality of food the farming community will provide and the environment they will produce it in. remember, we all eat Canadian produced imported food. However, only about three percent of Canadians are farmers. Other concerns about the farm crisis that should be addressed are:

#### **Pesticide pollution of food and water**

Today's consumer is becoming very concerned about quality of food regardless of where it was produced.

The World Wildlife Fund and the Canadian Environment Law Society shortly before Christmas 1998 reported they had found pesticide residues in food served in the parliamentary restaurants of the House of Commons.

Here in Saskatchewan scientific studies show that most of our surface water supplies are polluted with agricultural pesticides.

All our major cities and many small communities and farms use "surface water" for a potable water supply. It is not surprising because Saskatchewan farmers are the largest users of herbicides and pesticides in Canada. Perhaps you are not aware but the federal and provincial governments all have policies to support chemical agriculture only.

#### **Genetic engineering or biotechnology**

In the last few years transnational corporations are promoting herbicide resistant genetically engineered crops so they can gain power and control of the farming industry. Here in Saskatchewan genetically engineered herbicide resistant canola is the most visible one. However, recently Acres, U.S. reported 26 genetically engineered crops are being grown in North America. Instead of developing biological controls for pest and weeds, this means a greater use of pesticides.

Here in Saskatchewan our federal and provincial governments are pouring large volumes of money into the biotechnology community in Saskatoon that is operated by the transnationals.

They want to make Saskatoon the biotechnology capital of the world. However, the European community will not buy genetically engineered products, many Canadians reject the products and recent reports from the international scene say that many developing countries are worried about wild “genes” polluting their present crops. Here in Saskatchewan we have “jumping genes” which are genes that are jumping from genetically engineered canola to other varieties of canola. Certified organic farmers are very concerned the jumping genes may jump to other crops. They may also be jumping to weeds making them herbicide resistant.

### **Terminator genes**

Terminator genes are being developed so transnationals will have complete control of the seed grain supply. Farmers will not be able to save their own seed from year to year. The terminator gene program could lead to international disaster and starvation.

### **Antibiotics and growth hormones used in food production**

Antibiotics and growth hormones are used extensively in North America in the production of livestock and poultry.

European buyers completely reject meat and poultry products produced with either. Many Canadian consumers are very concerned and are looking for certified organic meat and poultry products because they are produced without antibiotics or growth hormones. The Canadian Medical Association is asking that the use of antibiotics in livestock and poultry production be discontinued because people are building up a resistance to antibiotics and they are ineffective.

On the other side of the coin, the Provincial Department of Agriculture is promoting the building of large corporate hog factories which require large volumes of antibiotics for the health of hogs.

### **Nutrition**

All nutrition comes from the soil or the sea. I know that you as a Newfoundlander are quite aware of what has happened to our fish supply, our main source of nutrition is the soil. The rapid growth of health food stores in the last 25 years that sell large volumes of vitamins and minerals demonstrates that our food is short of nutrition.

Our high-tech agriculture that is using large volumes of fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides is obviously producing large volumes of food but not necessarily nutritious. Excessive processing will also destroy the nutrition in the food. The greatest challenge of the next century is getting the nutrition from the farmers soil to the consumers' plate.

### **Soil degradation**

Our Canadian soils are being bombarded with toxic chemicals that destroy the micro-organisms in the soil. The weeds in conventional chemical agriculture are building up a resistance to herbicides requiring large volumes that are increasingly more destructive.

Well Mr. Murphy, agriculture is in a multi-facet crisis. There are some encouraging signs, the market for certified organic food is growing rapidly and prices are increasing.

Federal Finance Minister Paul Martin in his budget speech Feb. 16 said, “Canadians need pure water, food and air to maintain good health.”

I would suggest for your next program in Saskatchewan, for resource people, you invite Martin; Rhody Lake, former editor of *Alive: Canadian Journal of Health and Nutrition*; Kathy Holtslander, editor of *Synergy* magazine an organic farming publication; Marika English, Saskatchewan rural environment and Pat Mooney of Winnipeg, Man, who works for Rural Advancement Foundation International. Mooney is leading the campaign against the introduction of terminator genes.

For his work, Mooney recently won a United Nations award. We are looking forward to your next Saskatchewan program where consumers concerns about the agriculture crisis will be introduced and responded to by Mr. Martin.

Elmer Laird, president  
Back to the Farm Research Foundation

January 10, 2000 Davidson Leader

Previously at this time of year we just wished everyone a "Happy New Year". However, this year it's welcome to the new millennium-century-year or all three. Whatever it is I have a new job. In the last millennium-century-year or about three weeks ago, Rhody Lake, senior editor of *Alive: The Journal of Health and Nutrition* (circulation 250,000) phoned and asked me if I would be their agriculture correspondent. She went on to say that they were going to start informing their subscribers who are mostly urbanites more about agriculture and food. I described the farm situation to her on the telephone as follows:

The 1996 census reports there were 28,846,761 Canadians, all are consumers of food. At the same time there were 276,550 farms. Farms produce one or more food items, but farmers are also consumers like everyone else.

Farming is in a crisis, particularly here on the Prairie. The Saskatchewan government, supported by a number of farm organizations, has asked the federal government (Canadian taxpayers) for a \$1 billion subsidy or bail out for Saskatchewan farmers. If the Canadian taxpayer is going to kick through with the money, then it is time consumers voiced their opinion about the kind, quality and security of the food supply. Everyone is calling it an economic or financial crisis in agriculture. However, it is far more than finances and-for the lack of a better word I will call it a "system crisis". The agriculture system is not working.

Here in Saskatchewan we have 43 percent of the cultivated land in Canada. We have a million people or 3.3 per cent of the population. We are not able to feed ourselves, lineups at the food banks are getting longer and the lineups include farmers. Our food, water and soil is polluted with toxic chemicals all year long and is becoming more polluted all the time. Our air is polluted seven months of the year during spraying season. Billions of taxpayers' dollars are being spent on research and training agrologists in chemical agriculture. We have a high tech agriculture that is losing markets because of consumer concerns about polluted food.

Our agriculture is becoming increasingly more controlled by transnational drug and chemical corporations that are pressuring farmers to move to GM (genetically modified) products that require increasing amounts of toxic chemicals. This is being done under the guise of claiming it is necessary to feed the hungry world. This is not true. It is being done by the transnational corporations so they can control agriculture and make a huge profit out of toxic chemicals.

The chemical agriculture policies lead to increasing amounts of pollution and illness. Europe is refusing to buy our GM canola. Japan will start labelling canola in 2001. Australia is shipping large volumes of non-GM canola to Europe and taking over our former markets.

Europe refuses to buy our beef because it is fed antibiotics and growth hormones. We have lost a lot of traditional markets because of food quality. Our small towns are disappearing. Farmers are going bankrupt and leaving the farms. In many instances both husband and wife are working off the farm to pay the farm bills. They are driving on average 50 miles one way everyday to work.

The demand on our farm stress lines is rapidly increasing. Our branch line railroads are being abandoned and torn up. Our wooden grain elevators are being torn

down, our municipal roads and secondary highways are being destroyed from heavy truck traffic. Our highway death rate last year increased from 140 to 170 people. Saskatchewan has the second highest child poverty rate in Canada. There are no training programs to train young people to farm. Our health costs are soaring and waiting lists for health services are rapidly growing longer as times goes by. This is certainly not a foundation for a stable food supply for our nation.

I said, "Recent press reports indicate that it costs \$750 billion to provide computer security in North America for the new millennium, other reports say the cost was \$750 billion worldwide. However, nothing was mentioned about food security for the nation."

Rhody Lake said, "We need a revolution. So let's start one I agree the impetus must come from the consumer (she estimates 80percer are women), but farmers need to realize there is another way to farm and they better learn it." I said that I really didn't know how to start a revolution. I said, "Do you think there is a parallel between the new revolution and prohibition?" Nellie McClung who is being referred to today as "Canada's citizen of the century" with the help of mainly women persuaded the Manitoba government to pass legislation to give women a vote on Jan. 27. 1916. Alberta and Saskatchewan soon followed. In 1920 the Women's Temperance League persuaded Prairie governments to pass legislation to stop the legal sale of liquor. Rhody Lake thinks there is a parallel between pure unpolluted food, a clean environment and prohibition.

So as food consumers, Lake and I would like to appeal to all other Canadian food consumers to start lobbying farmers directly or through your co-operative, consumer, church, school, municipal government, sports, labour or community development organization to tell farmers that you want them to grow or produce the healthiest food possible, particularly if the want subsidies. There's an old saying, "He who pays the piper, calls the tune."

February 2001 *alive* #220**A Call to Action Canada's Farmers in Crisis**

Consumers, including farmers are an endangered species as they eat polluted food and live in a polluted environment. It's time to take action! Consumers need to have all farmers produce organic food in a clean environment.

The farming community is in crisis in more ways than one, especially in Saskatchewan. There are many small protest groups, crying for more tax dollars and government incentives, but these groups have failed to identify the problems of agriculture. They're divided on the chemical issues. Historically, farm organizations have rapidly increased their membership in times of crisis. That will not happen this time.

The National Farmers Union (NFU), which can trace its roots back to the Territorial Grain Growers of 1901 (before Saskatchewan became a province), has not responded to this particular crisis as it has in the past. The NFU founding convention of 1969 brought together provincial farm organizations from across Canada except Quebec. I attended that founding convention in Winnipeg with 2,400 other delegates and visitors, of which 600 were from Saskatchewan. The NFU is the only direct dues paying farm policy organization in Canada that has a National Charter and Constitution. Back then, president elect Roy Atkinson told the convention they should be concerned about corporations taking over and controlling the family farm. However, the transitional drug and chemical companies were already well on their way to taking over the family farm by getting farmers hooked on using toxic pesticides and herbicides.

**Pesticide Brainwashing**

Pesticides and herbicides were originally developed in World Wars I and II as biological controls for warfare. Some smart entrepreneurs decided to see if they could apply them to peace time uses. They were extremely successful. Two generations of Canadians have grown up on chemical farms and chemical farming has become a part of our culture. Some farmers will go organic if they get sick while spraying, however, others continue to spray their crops by employing custom operators. Spraying season, which used to last for two weeks in June, now lasts for seven months, from the time the ground thaws out in spring until it freezes up in the fall.

Chemical companies spend millions of dollars on advertising to convince farmers to use chemicals and then add those advertising costs to the price of the pesticides. In effect, the farmer pays for his own brainwashing. The rest of society pays in terms of degenerative illnesses and soaring health costs.

Health costs in Saskatchewan were \$2,000 per capita last year. Line ups at medical facilities are getting longer. We are in a health crisis. If we don't clean up our environment and produce healthy, certified organic food, our national health care program will go bankrupt.

### **Organic Crops Save Costs**

Agriculture chemicals are obsolete. They always were. Now, both weeds and pests have built up a resistance to most of them. This has led to increased volumes of chemicals being used at accelerated cost. Saskatoon lawyers report that farmers are going bankrupt because they can't pay their chemical bills. On the other hand, the stories coming from across the American border report that the reason half of the American farmers that are going broke is because they can't pay their medical bills! It's two sides of the same coin.

Farmers here are divided over chemicals. The majority of them have such a chemical dependency that they will likely go broke before they switch to organic.

"Good, let them go broke," you say. However, that will not be a good solution for the consumer.

Farmers, as a result of the Plant Breeder's Rights Act no longer have the right to save their own seed from year to year. If this situation continues, the corporations will take over the farms and consumers will have even more polluted, genetically modified and systematically chemicalized food at higher cost.

Federal and all provincial governments have policies to promote chemical agriculture only. (Saskatchewan, Canada's bread basket, spent only 0.48 percent of its last year's budget on organic agriculture.) Consumers, as taxpayers, are paying the huge cost for this government promotion of chemicals. Consumers, including farmers, must unite and press governments at all levels for a balanced agriculture, health and environmental policy or there will be no change.

But chemical farmers need support from consumers in order to make the transition to organic agriculture. The October 2000 edition of *Organic Food Business News* published in Florida, reports that the United States government is going to spend \$10 million in 15 states to help farmers make the transition to organic agriculture. The funds will be limited to \$50,000 per farm.

Closer to home, the May 2000 report of the Standing Committee on Environmental and Sustainable Development of the House of Commons entitled *Pesticides, Making the Right Choices*, recommends tax incentives for organic agriculture as well as an interim support program.

Consumers must take drastic, co-ordinated action to support the above policies.

July 29, 2002 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:

Mr. Anthony Wilson- Smith, Editor *Maclean's*

Mr. Bob Hughes, Executive Editor *The Leader Post*

Mr. Mike Badham, President of Saskatchewan Urban Municipal Association

Dear Gentlemen,

I am really pleased with the article entitled "Disappearing Saskatchewan" written by freelance writer Mary Nemeth, published in the July 15 edition of *Maclean's*. I think it was excellent and described the desperate position in rural Saskatchewan very well. Mr. Hughes, *Leader Post* editor, wrote a lengthy response to the *Maclean's* article in the July 18 edition of the *Leader Post* and really said nothing. It is obvious that he has a guilty conscience because the message *Maclean's* carried is what the *Leader Post* should have been telling the people of Saskatchewan all along and didn't. Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities President Mike Badham of Regina doesn't deny that rural Saskatchewan is a disaster area but thinks the black and white photos overdid it. He objects to the method. Somehow or other I think we have to get both of you gentlemen out of your ivory towers and particularly Bob Hughes. If the truth were only known the *Maclean's* article was a very moderate article. Perhaps we should look at some of the points of disaster *Maclean's* didn't cover.

1) Environment- Dr. Allan Cessna of the National Hydrology Water Institute (Federal Environment) reports that all the surface water in Saskatchewan he has tested (and that is his job) contains herbicide residues and also one third of the deep wells. He says that many have very high levels of herbicides. Here in Saskatchewan we have the highest rate of breast and cervical cancer and the second highest rate of prostate cancer in Canada. Saskatchewan uses one third of the pesticides used in Canada. There is little doubt that pesticides are one of the main causes of cancer.

Urbanites like Hughes and Badham are not particularly concerned about water quality in rural Saskatchewan because the large cities where they live have very sophisticated water treatment plants and whereas the small towns can't afford them. The large cities use a minimum amount of chlorine because of their sophisticated filtering systems, however, the small towns use large volumes of chlorine which has long been recognized as a carcinogenic.

2) The average age of farmers in Saskatchewan is 59. There are no existing programs that I know of to train farmers to farm (young or old). The farm economy (except for organic agriculture) is in such poor financial position that in many instances both the husband and wife are working off the farm to pay the bills and keep the farm operating. Farmers have lost their self-sufficiency. Saskatchewan has 47 per cent of the cultivated land in Canada and have only three per cent of the people (one million) and we are not feeding ourselves. The Regina Food Bank people told me a year ago that farmers were driving 70 miles to the Regina Food Bank to get food. We have a high tech agriculture technology, lots of agriculture experts and yet we are importing larger volumes of food all the time. However, a large volume of the food we produce is produced on chemical farms and there isn't any doubt that it is polluted with a wide range



of pesticides. In the summer of 2002 our research foundation tested our Davidson water supply for pesticides. There are 64 pesticides sold here in Davidson. Hughes and Badham don't seem to be concerned that the large cities in Saskatchewan rely on surface water which Dr. Cessna says is polluted with herbicides. They assume their sophisticated treatment plants remove all the pesticides. When the Romanow government was elected in 1991 they discontinued testing small town wells for anything. The Devine government and previous governments made money available to the Saskatchewan Research Council to test smaller community wells every six months for a larger number of pollutants including some herbicides. A year ago the Provincial Lab operated by Saskatchewan Department of Health was not an accredited laboratory. That is the lab that farmers and people from small communities relied on for testing their water. When the North Battleford water disaster happened the government had no water records for 10 years.

3) The future of the family farm. Transnational corporations are rapidly moving in to control and take over agriculture and the family farm. The most vicious legislation in their favor was the Plant Breeders Rights Act passed by the Mulroney government in 1991 which give corporations an opportunity to control our seed.

On January 10, 2002 the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate (SOD), which represents all certified organic farmers in the province filed a class action lawsuit against the transnationals Monsanto and Adventis in a federal court in Saskatoon for - #1. Polluting certified organic canola fields with pollen from genetically modified canola and - #2. To get an injunction to prevent the introduction of genetically modified wheat. The case is progressing slowly. Arnold Taylor, President of SOD says "certified organic farmers had no other choice but to take legal action, their backs were against the wall."

Here in Saskatchewan former premier, Roy Romanow and Saskatchewan's Liberal MP, Ralph Goodale, now a cabinet minister, are pouring money into Saskatoon to make it the biotechnology capital of the world but they can't really make up their minds to help the family farm survive. Obviously they both support the takeover of the family farm by transnational corporations.

There has been a record number of farm auction sales this spring and summer. Some farmers are retiring but many are getting out before they lose everything. The family farm has been our main system of agricultural production. If the transnational corporations take over they will have the consumer at their mercy. It will also mean an increasing amount of pollution in our air, food and water. Well gentlemen, (Hughes and Badham), I don't think that Maclean's "depressing" pictures were overdone. In fact I think they were rather moderate or modest.

Elmer Laird,  
President, Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

May 15, 2000 Davidson Leader

Glenn Hass, executive director,  
The Saskatchewan Institute of Agrologists

Dear Mr. Hass

RE: Agricultural Extension Services for Organic Farmers

Thank you very much for sending me a copy of *The Agrologist Act* (1994) and highlighting the sections of the Act that describe who will provide Agriculture Extension services to Saskatchewan farmers. The original Agrologist Act was passed in 1946 and updated in 1994. However, there has been considerable change in agriculture since 1946.

Saskatchewan farmers are in an economic crisis because of high input costs, low commodity prices and water, food and air is polluted with toxic agricultural chemicals. GE foods and polluted foods are being increasingly rejected by Canadian and off-shore customers. Certified organic agriculture is the only growth sector in terms of agriculture production and prices.

It appears agrologists are also in a crisis. Many farmers today are moving to organic agriculture. Agriculture extension services by agrologists are being supplied to chemical farmers only. Saskatchewan farmers who are going organic are relying on other organic farmers for production advice. Agrologists either because of training or government policy are not advising on or promoting organic agriculture. Farmers are doing what they did from 1905 to 1945 before there was an Agronomist Act, they are relying on other farmers and where ever they meet the discussion on organic agriculture goes on. Agronomists are rarely included because they have been educated and trained to do research and supply extension services to chemical farmers. This is not surprising because the Federal Department of Agriculture and all provincial departments support chemical agriculture only. In fact many organic farmers believe that in this farm crisis all governments are more interested in the survival of the chemical industry than they are the family farm. Organic farmers are paying taxes to support chemical agriculture and receiving very few research and extension services in return.

This winter the Davidson and Outlook agronomists, to their credit, held a workshop on organic farming at Strongfield. Gary Smith, agronomist and agriculture consultant from Saskatoon was the main speaker of the day. Arnold Taylor, certified organic farmer from Kenaston, was the speaker after lunch. He described his own farming program. Thirty-six farmers from Regina to Blaine Lake (only one of them certified organic) paid \$50 each for registration fees. I have attended several crop production meetings at Davidson this winter and only contributed to the silver collection for coffee. It seems to me this is penalizing farmers who want to go organic. This is an example of how organic farmers are paying for extension service and chemical farmers are not.

The basic difference between chemical and certified organic farmers is their philosophy. Chemical farmers work to control agriculture or nature and organic farmers work to co-operate with nature. To date our extension services are advising on the control

of agriculture. The function of the Saskatchewan Institute of Agrologists is best described in a news release issued by your office May 5, 2000. It said:

*The Saskatchewan Institute of Agrologists is the professional organization which is responsible for licensing all individuals who practice agrology in the province. The Agrologists Act ensures that all individuals who provide advice to farmers are qualified. All agrologists are bound by a code of ethics and are guided by a code of conduct. Because of the Act, farmers can be assured that the advice received is based on sound science and provided by a professional agrologist.*

Agrologists obviously have what is known in “labour circles” as a closed shop. Agronomists are also in a crisis because chemical agriculture is obsolete and that is what they have been providing extension services for. Many weeds and pests have built up resistance to pesticides. The chemicals that are still effective are so expensive it makes control of weeds too costly. Farmers are becoming aware they are responding to the advertising and not the effectiveness of the chemical. It is taking a lot more advertising dollars to keep farmers using the chemicals and they are really paying through the nose because the cost of the advertising is being added to the chemical bill. If farmers and agronomists are going to pull agriculture out of this crisis it is going to take a joint effort.

For example, in our recent telephone discussion we talked about “inter cropping”. I believe it is going to be a very important technique for both organic and chemical agriculture. The science of allelopathy needs to be explored. Biological controls for weeds and pests are needed. We need to do research on how to get the nutrition from the soil to the consumer’s table. Nothing is being done on any of the above. We need to know more about nutrients in weeds, micro-organisms in the soil, etc.

The job of certification inspector could be interpreted under the Agronomist Act as doing “agricultural extension” work. However, I am pleased to hear that the Saskatchewan Institute of Agrologists at their last annual meeting decided not to demand that organic certification inspectors be members of the agrologist organization. I understand that Manitoba agrologists made the same decision.

The Saskatchewan Organic Directorate is the umbrella organization of all organic certification organizations in the province. Perhaps it is time the SIA and SOD held a meeting to find out if they have some common goals. It is to be hoped that in the best interests of consumers and farmers (taxpayers) we can move back to establishing some independent agriculture research like we had prior to the *Plant Breeders Rights* legislation.

Agriculture scientists and farmers must be able to work independently and not be dominated by commercial interests.

If we don’t figure out a way to solve the farm crisis, both government employed agrologists and family farmers will be an endangered species.

Elmer Laird, president,  
Back to the Farm Research Foundation

April 17, 1995 Davidson Leader

Dr. Christopher Lind was the keynote speaker at a weekend conference entitled "Farmers and the Future of Farming." The conference, sponsored by Co-operating Friends of the Pool, was held at the Administration and Humanities Building, University of Regina. Lind, who has been a professor of Church and Society at St. Andrews College in Saskatoon since 1985, is the author of a new book entitled "Something's Wrong Somewhere". The subtitle is "Globalization, Community and the Moral Economy". Lind said that globalization of the international economy is really a revolution. He compared it to the Industrial Revolution of the mid 19th century. He said the invention and the development of the steam engine created a new power that changed everything in the work place and the economy. Today's revolution is driven by the computer chip. It contains knowledge and intellectual property. Whoever owns the knowledge and intellectual property in the computer chip will have the greatest influence in the Globalized International Economy.

Lind discussed the ethics of globalization. He used the words "competition", "domination" and "indifference". He said all three applied to the attitude of society in the industrial revolution and most of the people would be treated the same way in the globalization revolution. He said it was important for citizens to understand what is happening to them so they can cope with it.

To most of us farmers, workers and business people our primary concerns during the globalization revolution will be to have the resources or income to keep a roof over our heads, food on the table and clothes on our backs. Presently we are relying on food produced in California. However, this is a rather insecure source. California has had almost seven years of drought and have almost run out of irrigation water. However, in the last few months they have had so much rain, crops have been destroyed.

The Organic Food Business News is published monthly in Orlando, Florida. An article in the March, 1995 edition entitled "California Floods Up Prices", reports as follows: "Organic produce prices are expected to rise after severe rain and wind storms hit Northern California in late February, shredding lettuce, washing away strawberries, and flooding celery and broccoli fields.

There were many scattered reports of damage, but the extent of the total loss was unclear at press time.

"The supply has really been affected and we'll see the effects even after the rains, especially on the stone fruit," said Liz Bourret with Veritable Vegetable in San Francisco, CA.

"There will be high prices and shortages for awhile," said Peter Oill with Purepak, Inc. in Oxnard, CA.

"I've probably lost \$3 million this year," he added. In mid-March, Oill could not drive onto some of his 120 acres of celery fields, but walked in to survey the damage. "We lost 50 to 60% of our celery crop," he said.

In addition, Purepak's lettuce fields were totally underwater and strawberries were severely damaged. He expected to have more celery by the third week in March and lettuce supply was questionable. "We have to wait and see if they grow out." When supply is tight, Purepak does not usually raise its lettuce prices, Oill said.

Bourret expects the strawberry supply to remain tight. “They have really been impacted,” she said. They can’t hold up to this weather.” Purepak is down to 20 to 30 boxes of strawberries a day. It was producing 300 to 400 daily before the storms.”

The article goes on to say, “the stone fruit and almond growers face a tough year, according to Bourret. “This is a really important time for them to have good weather.” “Produce prices have gone up slightly, but we can still get what we order,” said a buyer at Good Life Grocery in San Francisco, CA. The store has been paying \$2 to \$3 more per case for lettuce and the broccoli price is “sky high”, he added.”

This article is on organically produced foods but conventional crops in times of shortage will be extremely high priced. Here in Saskatchewan we have 43% of the cultivated land in Canada and 4% of the population. However, we have a lot of hungry children and adults. We had twenty thousand employable people on Welfare last summer. We don’t seem to be able to feed ourselves with all the technology and agriculture resources we have. Four new families are applying for food everyday at the Regina Food Bank. What will happen when the high price of the damage caused by the recent California floods hits our Supermarket shelves. We will have more hungry people than ever. We can grow excellent vegetables and fruits in Saskatchewan. The time is long overdue to develop a program to become self-sufficient in foods that can be grown in Saskatchewan on our farms, in our communities and province.

It becomes increasingly important that in the globalization revolution we take steps to guarantee “food security” for all our citizens, immediately. The question is, “Will we?”

June 15, 1998 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:  
The First Lady  
Hillary Rodham Clinton,  
Honourary Chair  
Madeleine K. Albright, Chair  
Secretary of State,  
Ms. Jill Long Thompson, Chair

Re: The Second International Conference on Women in Agriculture, June 28 to July 2, 1998, at the Omni Shoreham Hotel, Washington, D.C., U.S.A.

Dear Mrs. Clinton and Ms. Albright:

Mrs. Rosella Diduck, who is a Certified Organic Farmer and member of the Saskatchewan Women's Agriculture Network from Kamsack, SK, Canada, will be attending the Second International Conference on Women in Agriculture. Mrs. Diduck asked me to write a column about challenges and problems facing women in Agriculture (particularly) in the next millennium. It can be summed up in one word and that word is "survival".

Survival has always been a challenge to past generations and cultures. However, for this millennium, it will mean understanding the political and economic forces in the part of the world we live in and relating them to the technology of our particular community or country and Mother Nature's Ecological Cycle. How well this is done will determine the "odds" of survival.

Powerful economic and political forces are moving us into the Global Village very rapidly where we are experiencing less and less control over our destiny. Today in North America the main growth industries seem to be Chartered Banks and Food Banks. In an age when we have more science, technology and people to regulate than we have ever had we are experiencing widespread deregulation. We have record numbers of corporate take-overs, many of them hostile; well over ninety percent do not involve any new capital - they are really power grabs. Chief Executive Officers are raking in record salaries and bonuses which seem directly related to their callous ability to fire large numbers of workers in the so-called interest of efficiency. If the CEO is extremely successful the value of the companies' shares on the stock market escalate.

People living in the Global Village today are plagued with uncertainties about health care and food supplies. As a result of rapid air travel we are less than twelve hours away from any (disease) epidemic in the world. In the past two or three years we have become very aware of England's Mad Cow disease. There is concern about the developed hormone BST or BGh that is being promoted in the USA to increase milk production and rumours that it is being smuggled into Canada. Many are concerned about pesticide pollution of water, food and air. Saskatchewan farmers and gardeners are the largest user of pesticides in Canada. All our surface water supplies are polluted with pesticides. All our cities rely on surface water for a potable water supply. Antibiotics are no longer a

sure-fire control for many viruses. We will have to move to a healthier life style and depend less on antibiotics to keep us well.

Today we have transnational drug and chemical corporations promoting the growing of a wide range of genetically engineered crops for their own economic interest. i.e. Here in Saskatchewan and in the prairie region of Canada they are promoting the growing of herbicide resistant genetically engineered canola. The consumer is not asking for this product, in fact Europe is outright rejecting it and Japan doesn't want it. However, they are promoting the genetically engineered canola so they can sell more agricultural chemicals. The toxic chemicals are causing a lot of health problems, the cancer rate is increasing, many people are suffering from allergies, the transnational drug and chemical companies are promoting and selling a wider range of drugs to try to cure the health problems created by the pesticides they have sold farmers and gardeners. Indeed, we are a treadmill operated by the transnational drug and chemical companies. Agricultural chemicals were developed in World War I for biological controls. When WWII ended, chemical companies decided to find a peace time use for pesticides, Agent Orange, a mixture of the herbicides 2-4D and 2-4-5T was used in the Vietnam War as a defoliant but the end of war has not stopped the use of war technology. We have been using herbicides and pesticides in increasing amounts since WWII for agricultural production all over the world to the extent they have become a threat to human health everywhere. The World Health Organization (WHO) claims that if we clean up our environment we will reduce our health care cost twenty- five percent.

North America is by far the largest user of non-renewable fossil fuels in the World. Therefore, we are the largest contributor to green house gases and global warming.

Even if we reject the scientific theory of global warming, we are the largest user per capita of non-renewable resources. In the past century we discovered and harnessed the non-renewable resources, however, there is little doubt the non-renewable resources we are rapidly using up will not last through the next century. In fact to date we are no doubt demonstrating to the rest of the world what not to do.

Survival has a much different focus in different areas of the world. i.e. In West Africa where the lowest recorded temperature is sixty-two degrees above Fahrenheit and temperatures go up to one hundred and ten degrees above daily all during the year no one is concerned about freezing. Here in Canada there is a grave concern if we run out of fuel in the winter time when it is minus forty.

Survival also means having control of our food producing resources and control of our environment. In the Global Village the greatest single threat at this time to our future survival is the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI). If it is passed by the wealthiest twenty-nine nations of the world it will eliminate our collective control of our food, energy, health care and our environment. Transnational corporations will be in control and will be able to exploit all our resources for the economic benefit of their shareholders. It will happen in the United States, the wealthiest country in the world, and it will happen in the poorest country at the same time.

Nutrition will be extremely important in the next millennium. We have almost exhausted many of our food resources such as fish from the sea. The main source of nutrition we have left is the soil of this planet. In Mother Nature's ecological cycle prior to plumbing and when energy was in short supply, excess nutrition went back into the

soil close to where the food came from that people and wildlife consumed. However, today we ship great volumes of food to large population centres and, with the help of the flush toilet, the surplus nutrients flow into the lakes, rivers or sea rather than back into the soil. The main challenge of the next millennium will be to make sure all the nutrition from the soil ends up on the consumers' table.

Sincerely,  
Elmer Laird, President  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation



June 22, 1998 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:

The First Lady Hillary Rodham  
Clinton, Honorary Chair  
Secretary of State, Madeleine K.  
Aibright, Chair,  
Ms. Jill Long Thompson, Chair.

Part 2 Re: The second International Conference on Women In Agriculture, June 28 to  
July 2, 1998 at the Omni Shorehain Hotel, Washington, D.C., U.S.A.

Dear Mrs. Clinton and Ms. Aibright,

Last week in my column I discussed some of the issues and concerns about Survival in the Global Village in the next millennium. This week I will focus on what action some people in Saskatchewan, particularly women, are doing about it in a great variety of ways. Traditionally, women have been responsible for the health and well being of the family. However, since the development of antibiotics and high tec medicine that responsibility has somewhat diminished. Now we are moving into an era where there are viruses and bugs that the most powerful antibiotics won't kill. At the same time we are bombarded with industrial and agriculture pollution that is causing many illnesses. Every week almost, we hear of a new illness we haven't heard of before. Pollution is attacking our immune systems and continually lowering our ability to fight off disease. Women seem to be more aware of what is happening to our health as a result of environmental pollution than men are. Many are leading the way to promoting a healthier environment and life style. I don't know them all (unfortunately) but I will report on what a few are doing to improve the opportunity of survival on this planet in the next millenium.

Rosella Diduck is a seventy-six- year-old chemical widow who lives on and owns a 640 acre (1 section) farm at Kamsack, SK, Canada. Her husband, John, died on April 1, 1987 as a result of his exposure to anhydrous ammonia, a toxic chemical fertilizer. He was ill for four years prior to death.

Shortly after John Diduck died, Rosella publicly proclaimed that she was a chemical widow. There are many chemical widows in small town Saskatchewan, but she was the first to make the proclamation. Others say "what is the use? I have lost my husband, it won't bring him back."

Since 1987 Rosella has turned the farm over to complete organic production, the farm is certified organic and is presently marketing organic products.

Maggie Mumm and husband, Jim, of Shellbrook, SK, grow five kinds of crops to produce sprouting seeds. With the help of other producers in the district they process and market thirty different kinds of certified organic sprouting seeds nationally and internationally.

Elizabeth Thomas of Saskatoon is a director of the National Farmers Union. With the help of her husband they produce and market organic vegetables from their Second Avenue craft store in Saskatoon.

Heather Miller grew up in North Battleford, SK and presently lives in Burnaby, BC. She took nursing at U.B.C. She specialized in paediatric nursing of terminally ill children for several years until she collapsed with ecological illness. She has recovered and since that time has co-authored, with her mother, Myrna, "The Toxic Labyrinth" which is a story of her illness and recovery. She was allergic to so many things, she consumed a formula only (no food) for six months. ("Formula" is a special product ecologically ill patients consume because all food makes them ill.) Today she is working to convert the 640 acre family farm at North Battleford, SK to organic production.

Connie Kehler grew upon a farm at Davidson, SK. For twelve years she has been operating an Organic Greenhouse at Belle Plain, SK. Over the years she has written information on the growing and use of thirty- three herbs for an Agriculture Canada publication and will be starting to work on the pictures of the herbs for the publication shortly.

Cathy Holtslander presently of Saskatoon, taught adult education in many of Saskatchewan's northern communities. She became coordinator of Saskatchewan's Environmental Network last September. In addition she is co-editing and publishing "Synergy" a publication of particular interest to organic fainters, gardeners and environmentalists.

Large corporations with the help of the Saskatchewan Government are promoting large multi-million dollar hog factories in Saskatchewan. Susan and Sandra Lowndes, Agricultural graduates have come home to help their father on the family farm. Manka English who, with her husband, operates a gas station, confectionary, restaurant and bakery at Hanley, SK. All three are concerned about the potential threat of water and air pollution and the reduction in value of neighbours property from the hog factories. More recently they, have enlisted the support of Saskatoon lawyers, Audrey Brent and Lynn Greenhorn, to travel to meetings in farm communities to advise the residents that are threatened with hog factories on the legal, environmental and health issues. They promote environmentally friendly hog production using composting as a method of manure disposal. Rite Nordwick, Cadillac, SK, is the president of the Canadian Organic Certification Coop Ltd. The cooperative supplies certification services to organic farmers in Saskatchewan.

The Saskatchewan Eco-Network and the Saskatchewan Environmental Society share offices in Saskatoon. Following is a list of the Women Directors of the Saskatchewan Environmental Society:

*Marie Ann Bowden is an Associate Dean of Law at the University of Saskatchewan, teaching in the areas of property, environmental law and municipal law. She is a member of the Canadian Environmental Network Environmental Assessment caucus, the Regulatory Advisory committee and their subcommittee on Crown corporations and was Chair of the Saskatchewan Environmental Assessment Reform Commission in 1991.*

*Carroll Chubb has a Ph.D. in physiology and biophysics from the University of Washington in Seattle, WA. She has taught at the University of Saskatchewan and is also a new member of the Saskatoon Environmental Advisory Committee. Carroll's interests lie particularly in the area of toxins in the environment.*

*Ann Coxworth is a past member of the Saskatchewan Electrical Energy Options Review Panel and was a board member of the Saskatchewan Energy Conservation and Development Authority throughout its four-year lifetime. Ann has a Master's degree in*

*Nuclear Chemistry from the University of California. She also volunteers full-time as SES's Program Co-ordinator.*

*Ann was presented with the Saskatchewan Volunteer Medal by Saskatchewan's Lieutenant Governor Jack Wiebe, last spring for her many years of voluntary service in environmental work.*

*Louise Gagne is a family physician from Saskatoon. She has a long-standing interest in environmental issues and alternative medicine. In the distant past, she once lived on a back-to-the-land, self-sustaining farm called the Mycorrhizal Society.*

*Jan Norris' environmental activism began in Toronto with a group called Citizens for a Safe Environment. They successfully put to rest several proposals for garbage incinerators and helped get that city's antiquated incinerator closed down. In Saskatoon, Jan has been an SES volunteer for six years. Jan has a B.A. in philosophy and is currently working on a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree.*

*Joan Harrison has a background in the fields of biology, anthropology and education. She has been involved with environmental concerns since the early 1970s. Joan is Master Composter, the board secretary for the Sask. Organic Development Council, member of a small land-owning co-op and an active member of Steep Hill Food Co-op. In the past, she has served as the Sask. Eco-Network staff person and then the Sask. representative on the Canadian Environmental Network's National Steering Committee.*

In addition to the women I have listed who are active in organic farming or environmental protection and clean up activities there are about 450 certified organic farmers in the province. Women are playing an active role in all organic farm activities. They are prepared and are leading the way for developing a healthy lifestyle in the next millennium.

Sincerely, Elmer Laud  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

March 8, 2004 Davidson Leader

### **Alternate Ag. Practices could revitalize economy**

Open letter to Eric Cline. Saskatchewan Minister of Industry and Resources.

Re: Provincial Government policies required to revitalize Saskatchewan's agriculture industry, further to our conversation following the Davidson and District Economic Development Board Meeting on March 2, 2004.

We are now living in the age of globalization. This means we- are increasingly experiencing more heavy-handed controls by transnational drug and chemical companies. Prior to 1991 when Prime Minister Brian Mulroney passed the *Plant Breeders Rights* legislation that gave control of agriculture to the corporations. Prior to 1991, all federal and provincial political parties supported the family farm as the primary or basic system of agriculture production. The NDP and its predecessor, the CCF were among the strongest supporters of the family farm prior to 1991.

However, since that time, politicians of all parties no longer support the family farm and appear to be waiting for the corporations to take over.

The NDP has been supporting the construction and operation of corporate hog barns for quite a few years. Obviously, it has abandoned its support for the family farm. In fact, when Eric Upshall was minister of agriculture, the NDP did away with the provincial Hog Marketing Hoard. This action gave the hog corporations (sometimes called hog factories) a distinct advantage in the market place over the private producers.

The Schmeiser-Monsanto Supreme Court case will have a very definite impact on Canadian agriculture. The Supreme Court has already recognized that Monsanto does not own the seed. It just owns the gene in GMO seed. The court will be making a decision on two questions:

1. Will corporations be able to continue to patent the gene in the seed; and
2. Will farmers have the right to save their own seed.

Note: The media reported on the morning of March 3, 2004 that the vote in Mendocino County, Calif. on March 3, made the county a GMO free county, the first in the United States. Percy Schmeiser, Bruno, Sask. farmer is given the credit for helping win the campaign. He spent several days in early February driving from meeting to meeting in Mendocino County campaigning against GMOs. Press reports indicate that Monsanto spent \$500,000 in their campaign supporting GMOs and lost.

Recommendation #1: If Premier Calvert and the NDP government are going to revitalize rural Saskatchewan and keep young people on the farm, they must unequivocally not only support the family farm, they must demonstrate their support for the family farm.

If Schmeiser wins his Jan. 20, 2004 Supreme Court case, it will certainly help the family farm cause. If he loses, it will be a disaster for all Canadian family farmers.

Recommendation #2: If we are going to have a revitalized rural economy we need to build self-sufficient rural communities. This means that in general, we grow food and provide all the services within reason to serve ourselves and satisfy our own needs.

However, if we have surpluses of food or a product from a community industry we use what we need in our home community first and export the rest.

Self-sufficient communities are very necessary in this global warming and they would certainly fit in with the Kyoto Agreement which the Canadian government has signed.

**Example #1:**

In an agricultural area we should be able to be self-sufficient in all the food that can be grown here. Today, large trucks are hauling fruits and vegetables from California. If we buy lettuce, tomatoes or cucumbers in Davidson, we are contributing to global warming because of excessive transportation cost and we are also creating jobs in California. If the provincial government encouraged or subsidized the building of solar heated straw bale green houses and root cellars, we could be self-sufficient in fruits and vegetables all year round and we would create jobs for young people right here in our home communities.

**Example #2:**

If the provincial government encouraged the building of a grain cleaner, stone ground flour mill and bakery in every trading centre in Saskatchewan, we could supply our communities with certified organic stone ground whole wheat flour and many other products from home-grown grain. This would help give everyone in our community a nutritious diet and create jobs.

**Example #3:**

One of our Research Foundation directors, John Sperling, has a butcher shop in Davidson. He also does “on the farm” butchering. If you want to buy organic beef, pork, or buffalo, he will drive out to a farmer’s place in the community who has these products for sale. He will butcher the animals in the farmer’s yard or pasture. (This is a very humane way to butcher animals, it saves all the stress of trucking, etc.).

He will take the animals back to his shop, cut and wrap them after he has hung them an appropriate time. This is a method of supplying quality meat at minimum cost and minimum use of energy.

I would recommend that you read a new book, *Secret Ingredients*, by Stuart Laidlaw. Mr. Laidlaw is a journalist with *The Toronto Star*. He describes very well the control the transnational drug and chemical companies have on the hog and poultry industry in the United States. He also reports that because of our “supply management” policies for milk, eggs and poultry, Canadian farmers are in a better position to do battle than American farmers with the transnationals as they move in.

I grew up in southwest Saskatchewan in a town called Wymark in the 1930s. At that time, my father was delivering wheat in the fall for 19 cents to 29 cents a bushel. In today’s prices, that is from \$2.70 to \$3.15 a bushel. Today, Hard Red Spring Wheat at the Pool in Davidson is presently worth \$2.57 a bushel. Our prices are lower now than in the Depression of the 1930s. In the organic market, the same quality wheat is selling for \$7.50-\$8.00 per bushel. Flax at the Davidson elevator is worth \$8.50 per bushel, however, certified organic flax is selling for \$26-\$28 per bushel. Obviously, many farmers are going to have to move to organic production because of economic reasons. That is what I did 35 years ago and I never regretted it.

Last February, I went on an organic tour of Cuba. On the tour, I met a German scientist Dr. Fritz Balzer. He was from a leading research station in Germany. He emphatically said “organic food is more nutritious than chemically produced food.” In fact, he gave us a one and a half hour lecture on how they did their research.

There is little doubt that the reason for the low price of chemically raised wheat today is because both buyers and consumers in Europe are aware of his research and that is why the price of Canadian chemically raised wheat is so low. Canadian scientists have not arrived at the same conclusion yet, or if they have they are not expounding on it.

Sometimes you can get a good price for products for various reasons. However, there is a very important rule in the world of commerce:

“It’s important to supply the quality of product the buyer demands in the long haul.”

Recommendation #3: Develop policies and programs that will help farmers move to certified organic agriculture.

Here in Saskatchewan, we have one main advantage in the production of healthy livestock and poultry. We have space, we have 43 per cent of the cultivated land in Canada. Let’s start producing the healthiest food we can produce and I am -sure we will revitalize our agriculture, our economy and our health and develop a healthy, safe environment while we are doing it. I would like to discuss the topic further at your convenience.

Elmer Laird, president  
Back To The Farm  
Research Foundation

April 4, 2005

**Organic farming could help resolve farm income crisis**

Open letter to Neil Hardy, president of SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) and Terry Hildebrandt, president of APAS (Agriculture Producers Association of Saskatchewan)

Re: Why don't you support certified organic farming to help resolve the farm income crisis and help clean up the environment?

In the year of 2000 the Federal Government Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development produced a 212 page report entitled Pesticides, Making the Right Choices for the Protection of Health and the Environment.

The recommendation on page 184 under the heading of Tax Incentives for Organic Agriculture states:

The Committee recommends that the government develop an organic agriculture policy for the transition from pesticide-dependent farming to organic farming. This policy should include tax incentives, an interim support program during the transition period, technical support for farmers, the development of post-secondary organic farming programs and enhanced funding for research and development (R&D) in organic agriculture.

**1. Farm Leaders should be supporting the above recommendation**

I am surprised that you as farm leaders are not supporting the above recommendation. The world is hungry for high quality certified organic nutritious food and our environment is polluted with toxic pesticides. A nutritionist recently interviewed on CTV reported that 55 per cent of Canadians eat some organic food. She also said the 70 per cent of the certified organic food sold in Canada is imported from somewhere else.

**2. The federal and provincial governments should abandon their "pesticide only" agriculture policies.**

Here in Saskatchewan all of our surface water and one-third of the deep wells are polluted with pesticides, says Dr. Allan Cessna of the National Hydrology Water Institute. People are breathing pesticides all during our seven-month spraying season.

Except for the few that eat organic food, it is all polluted with pesticides. We have the highest rate of breast and cervical cancer and the second highest rate of prostate cancer in Canada. Even our pets (dogs and cats) have the highest rate of cancer in the country. We use one-third of all the pesticides used in Canada, and I know pesticides are responsible for the high rate of cancer. Federal dollars will not save our Medicare system if we don't clean up our environment and start producing healthy food.

**3. Cuban Tour Food Prices and Nutrition**

In February 2003, I went on an organic tour of Cuba with 20 others from various parts of the world. There was a German scientist, Dr. Fritz Balzar, from a leading research foundation in Germany on the tour. Dr. Balzar in an hour and a half lecture in

Cuba stated unequivocally that certified organic food was more nutritious than chemically produced food. I'm sure that Europeans frequently hear Dr. Balzar claim of the superior quality of certified organic food. However, he is not heard here in Canada. Canadian farmers are wondering why their prices for chemically produced food is so low. They seem to be completely unaware that they are producing chemically grown food for a market that wants organic food and our farm leaders or politicians are not telling them. When are you going to start?

#### **4. Chemical farming obsolete**

Pesticides were developed as biological controls during World Wars I and II. However, following WW II, some smart entrepreneur with the help of promoters and advisers convinced us that we could control nature. Ever since we started using pesticides both weeds and pest have built up a resistance to pesticides. That is why we had to have the *Plant Breeders Act* that Prime Minister Mulroney's government passed in 1991. Transnational corporations need the GMO system to breed plants so they could use stronger herbicides that would continue to kill the weeds without killing the plants (i.e. Roundup Ready Canola). GMOs have nothing to do with feeding the hungry world as corporations claim.

During the Vietnam War, a lot of Agent Orange (2, 4D & 2,4,5-T) was used by the American Army to defoliate the Vietnamese forest. Even though the Vietnam War has been over for 30 years, I understand that a lot of the land has never recovered. Dr. Tan Biocheartist at the Lester B. Pearson International University at Victoria, B.C. says that if we will keep pouring on the pesticides, we will destroy the productivity of the soil. We should have learned by now that you can't control Mother Nature.

Mother Nature is a powerful old girl and I want to work with her.

#### **5. No one supports the family farm anymore as a Basic Unit of Agriculture Production**

I have not heard a politician from any political party (provincial or federal) state publicly in the last 15 years that they support the family farm as a basic unit of agriculture production. It appears that all politicians are waiting for all family farmers to go bankrupt or retire so the transnational corporations can take over the farms. The average age of farmers is 59 years old and I don't see any concern expressed by political parties about the question who will take over the family farm.

Since May 20, 2003, when they found the Mad Cow Disease in Alberta, not one government including the federal government has said, "our producers are producing the healthiest beef it is possible to produce." Why? However, the Mad Cow Disease has done one good thing, it has made many consumers concerned about the quality of food they eat. Many consumers all over the world are rejecting pork, beef and poultry fed with growth hormones and antibiotics.

Most farm organizations are asking for subsidies to produce polluted food. If the federal government is going to subsidize farmers with taxpayers' dollars, it should be for the healthiest food it is possible to produce, not what has passed certain Canadian Health Food Inspection tests. If we get a reputation for producing as healthy of food as possible, which we once did before the pesticide era, no border will be closed to our food.



Here in Saskatchewan, we have lots of space to get rid of factory hog barns and produce the healthiest livestock and poultry it is possible to produce. Our Canadian consumers who help pay taxes and our foreign customers all deserve the most healthiest nutritious food it is possible to produce. If we expect our Medicare system to survive, we need unpolluted water, air and certified organic food.

I am 81 years old now and I often think how lucky I am as a result of the fact that my mother, during her pregnancy that brought me into this world, never was exposed to residues of toxic pesticides in the water she drank, the food she ate and the air she breathed, nor was she exposed to this environment until 25 years later.

Children born today are exposed to all these pesticides and toxins from the time of conception. It is affecting both their physical and mental development. The scientific studies have been done that prove the children are suffering. Let us start cleaning up the water, food and air immediately to give future generations an opportunity to enjoy good health.

Elmer Laird, president  
Back To The Farm  
Research Foundation

May 20, 1996 Davidson Leader

Open Letter To:

Roy Romanow, Premier  
Eric Upshall, Minister of Agriculture and Food  
Dwain Lingenfelter, Minister of  
Economic Development  
Eldon Lautermilch, Minister of  
Energy and Mines

Gentlemen:

Regarding: The Royal Commission on the Potential of Agriculture in Rural  
Saskatchewan and particularly Saskatchewan Agriculture's role in the global village

It is time to examine both Canada's and Saskatchewan's role in the global village, we are following two distinct and diametrically opposing policies. 1) We are concerned about the burning of fossil fuels and their effect on the "ozone layer" that contributed to global warming; and 2) the global marketplace, F.T.A. (Free Trade Agreement), N.A.F.T.A. (North American Free Trade Agreement), and G.A.T.T. (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade), all are promoting the shipping of all commodities as far as possible. Food today in the United States is being shipped on an average of thirteen hundred miles before it is used. Shipping food long distances does not improve the quality. Some commodities that can only be produced in one part of the world are needed in other parts of the world and sometimes this includes food. However, in many instances we are moving food products unnecessarily. (i.e. Shipping California grown potatoes to Saskatchewan, which is done frequently.) There is an old British saying "It's like carrying coals to Newcastle." It's a wonderful idea for transnational marketers and transportation companies but makes food expensive, destroys the environment, highways, etc.

Perhaps it is time for all provinces including Saskatchewan to determine what products they can be self-sufficient in (particularly food) and what they will need to import. For example, when potatoes are imported from California it creates jobs in California. If they were grown and stored here it would create jobs here and eliminate transportation costs. Saskatchewan has global marketplace. Today in the 139.6 million acres of cultivated farm land and even with our short growing season we can produce a wide range of high quality food products.

There are many forecasts about what the population will be in our global village by the years of 2020 or 2030. Regardless of the figures, we know it is becoming more densely populated all the time. Saskatchewan has two of the most valuable assets it is possible to have for agricultural development in the global village. It has lots of fertile soil (admittedly some needs to be rebuilt) and space. Robert W.P. Jansen, an organic food buyer from Holland who visited Girvin in 1987, said, "We have no room in Holland. We have ten million people, we have more cows than people, we have more hogs than cattle, we don't know what to do with the waste."

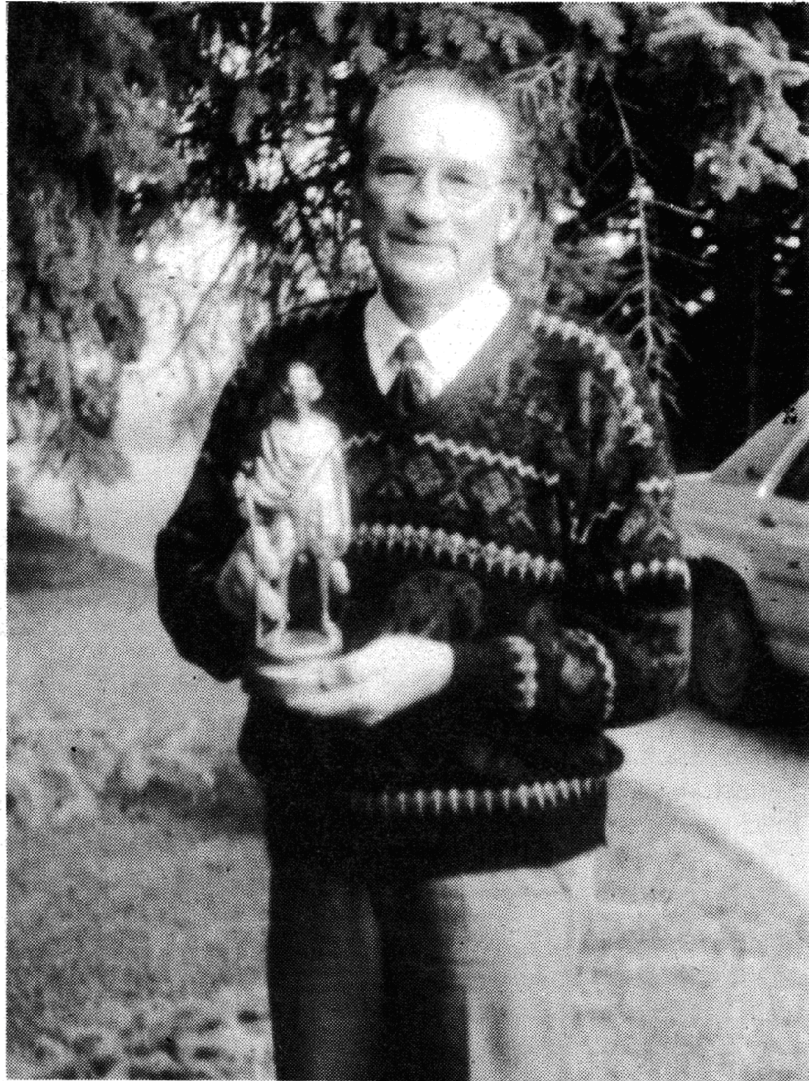
Unfortunately, your government doesn't have any vision of the potential or policies for the development of agriculture in rural Saskatchewan. Your "cut back" policies in health, education and municipal government could very well compare to "strategic withdrawal" of rural areas in military terms. Your government has accepted the status quo view that farms will get larger and more mechanized until there are a few farmers driving out from the major cities to farm work camps during the summer to farm the land. If you continue the present policy very few rural health, education and municipal services will be required.

Today, in terms of provincial food self-sufficiency in foods that are grown in Saskatchewan, we don't know where our food comes from. Statistics Canada or the Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food Statistics Branch do not keep records of how much Saskatchewan grown food is used in Saskatchewan. We need these figures to determine what our requirements are for a local market and from there our potential for the export market. There are several reasons we should examine our potential at this time. Self-sufficiency in food is an important component of national defence. In case of a war or natural disaster it would be embarrassing if we had to have food aid sent to Saskatchewan. It would also be an important component in eliminating food banks and creating employment.

Mr. Premier, I think it is important that you establish immediately a Royal Commission on the potential of agriculture in rural Saskatchewan and particularly Saskatchewan's role in the global village.

Elmer Laird, President  
Back to the Farm Research Foundation

# III. TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS AND BIOTECHNOLOGY



Percy Schmeiser holds the Mahatma Gandhi Award he received for non-violence.

*(Leader photo by Elmer Laird)*

"History demonstrates that when scientists develop a new technology mankind goes overboard to use it in many ways. We do not have the collective ability to use the new technology only for the betterment of mankind. Individuals or groups...frequently get control of a technology and use it to promote their individual interest...Countries waging war often claim they are using technology to destroy their enemies in the name of God...Frequently they say it is "God's Will" even if it is to develop their own agenda."

--- Elmer Laird, January 8, 1996

*Modern science and technology and reached a new level and have come into agriculture as the 'Second Green Revolution.' Biotechnology now comprises another sector in agriculture, as genetically modified organisms (GMOs), are developed in laboratories, patented by transnational corporations (TNCs), and grown around the world. Laird confronts this controversial topic with gusto, criticizing it for the effects both known and unforeseen, such as reduced biodiversity, chemical-resistant pests, genetic contamination, and the violation of farmers' rights. He calls for government action in controlling biotechnology research, protecting farmers, and challenging TNCs as was done against Monsanto by the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate on behalf of Saskatchewan organic farmers.*

*Laird condemns the federal and provincial governments for ceding to the powerful chemical lobby and adopting policies favourable to TNCs. Most notable is the Plant Breeders' Rights Act, which gives power to TNCs to develop, patent, and control seeds – a life form and food source on which farmers, consumers, and everyone depend.*

*This controversy gained international attention when Percy Schmeiser, a farmer from Bruno, Saskatchewan, was accused of violating Monsanto's patent on GM Round-Up Ready canola. He decided to defend himself against the corporate giant, and is now recognized internationally for his courage in a 'David vs Goliath' battle of farmers' rights to their seeds.*

## **GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS**

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January 8, 1996 Davidson Leader

The science of biotechnology is not new. British born Dr. D. Roy Cullimore, Professor of Microbiology, University of Regina, and director of the Regina Water Research Institute, said recently, "I wrote my first and last 'paper' on Biotechnology when I was a student at the University of Nottingham, England, in 1961." Obviously, he didn't think that biotechnology was a very important development in science at that time and no one else did either. Conditions were different then and apparently people in positions of power in the business community couldn't figure out how to use biotechnology to their economic advantage. Here in Canada practically all agricultural research including plant breeding was directed and carried out by Agriculture Canada. Today, 35 years later, Agriculture Research including biotechnology and plant breeding is controlled and carried out almost exclusively by trans-national drug chemical companies frequently subsidized by federal and provincial governments. Their interest in the research is to sell agricultural chemicals and genetically engineered seed for profit. The drug and chemical companies spend millions dollars every year on advertising to convince chemical farmers they need high priced fertilizer, pesticides and genetically engineered seed to grow crops successfully. The farmers pay for the ever increasing cost of the farm inputs and the advertising as well. It is difficult to get information on genetically engineered products. However, here on the prairie companies are promoting herbicide resistant canola (used for cooking oil) and flax (flaxseed oil and flax are used in many bakery products). There is a reason for the new herbicide resistant canola and flax. It is a well known fact that weeds are building up a resistance to herbicides and if stronger herbicides are used they would kill the crop (canola and flax this instance). In order to continue selling herbicides the companies have developed new genetically engineered herbicide resistant canola and flax. Obviously, the trans-national drug and chemical companies are not interested in the health of the consumer or pollution of soil and environment. The Dec. 8, 1995, edition of the Edmonton Journal reports on an Ottawa Canadian Press story on page 3 entitled "Hi-tech spud ready to make market debut". The article states: "A pest-killing potato is poised to become the first genetically altered plant to hit Canadian stomachs The New Leaf potato developed by is one of the seven genetically engineered foods that the; Federal Health Department has quietly approved this year for human consumption."

The article continues "The New Leaf is identical to the well known Burbank potato except that it contains genes from a bacteria known as bacillus thuringiensis (Bi) which kills Colorado potato beetles. The New Leaf will not be labelled as genetically altered when it is sold."

Incidentally, Colorado beetles do not like flax. However, a couple of flax plants to each potato seeded in the row will control the beetle. Most people would be more confident their digestive systems could handle potatoes grown intermittently with flax than genetically engineered ones.

History demonstrates that when scientists develop a new technology mankind goes overboard to use it in many ways. We do not have the collective ability to use the new technology only for the betterment of mankind. Individuals or groups (“power brokers” is today’s term) frequently get control of a technology and use it to promote their individual interest which is frequently wealth or power or both. Countries waging war often claim they are using technology to destroy their enemies in the name of God, Allah, Buddha or Confucius. Frequently they say it is “God’s Will” even if it is to develop their own agenda.

Meanwhile, Saskatchewan Agriculture has researchers quietly working to prepare information on weed, insect and plant disease control without chemicals which will be released before spring. The information is being prepared to help farmers reduce or eliminate the use of chemicals. Federal Minister of Environment Sheila Copps promised regulations would be in place over a year ago to control the development of biotechnology. Presently there is no sign of any regulation on either side of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel. In the meantime the Canadian and Saskatchewan governments are pouring money into Saskatoon biotechnology firms, they want to make Saskatoon the biotechnology capital of Canada. Gunpowder was invented sometime before 1200 A.D., maybe by the Chinese, Arabs or Muslims (history is not clear). Nobel invented dynamite in 1867, the year of Canadian confederation. In this century science has produced a number of new technologies, mostly for war. We have had nerve gas, germ warfare, biological weapons for war which was the foundation for our present agricultural chemical industry. The Americans used Agent Orange, a mixture of 2-4D and 2-4-5T to defoliate Vietnam, nuclear weapons and nuclear energy. We have also had thalidomide, silicone breast implants, and undetectable plastic land mines, which were all disasters. Dr. Cuffimore is right, he says we should look at biotechnology as a scientific development like many others that will be of dubious value for mankind. Apparently now that we have it, we will have to learn to control and live with it.

November 8, 1993 Davidson Leader

The consequences of the uncontrolled, unregulated development of biotechnology research and development is frightening to put it mildly. In an article in the May 1993 edition of "Alive: Canadian Journal of Health and Nutrition" Joseph E. Cummins, Associate Professor (Genetics) of Department of Plant Sciences, University of Western Ontario in an article entitled "Tinkered Genes in the Supermarket" said, "An ominous global picture appeared last year when the US vice-president announced that the US will allow sale of genetically engineered fruit and vegetables."

He went on to explain, "Gene tinkered crop plants being prepared for market include potatoes with genes from chickens, silk moth or bacteria; tomatoes with genes from flounders, bacteria; or virus; corn with genes from bacteria, fire fly or wheat—along with numerous other examples."

He said, "The biotechnology industry hopes to market such crops without labelling them or testing them on animals, obliging the people of North America to be white mice for their experiments. Such tests on humans has already led to disaster. A food material sold in natural food stores – tryptophan (Nature's Bounty, Showa-Denko Co) was contaminated by a byproduct produced by a gene-tinkered bacterium. The byproduct caused an auto-immune blood disease called *eosinophile myalgia* syndrome (a disease somewhat similar to Lupus). The disease killed 27 people and permanently injured between 5,000 and 100,000. Among the victims was a goalie for the Islanders, Mark Fitzpatrick, a 22-year-old from Vancouver, whose playing life was threatened. These were the first acknowledged victims of biotechnology –but not the last."

He went on to explain why the average citizen is in the dark about biotechnological development. He said, "The main problem with biotechnology is scientific imperialism. Scientists are a pampered minority, who frequently have little or no contact with average people and they distrust average people. Jim Watson a co-discoverer of the DNA structure, states about biotechnology in his book *The DNA Story*, (191). "It was never the intention of those who might be called the "molecular biology establishment" to take the issue to the general public to decide."

Here in Saskatchewan the press have reported that multi-national chemical companies are carrying out biotechnological research to develop varieties of grain and oil seeds that have more chemical tolerance. Over the last forty years of chemical agriculture both farmers and researchers realize that weeds (and pests) have continually built up a resistance to agriculture chemicals. The chemical companies know that if they want to continue to sell their products they must develop varieties of grains and oil seeds that their chemical products won't kill.

This is being done without any concern for our environment. The Alberta government is warning people not to drink water from shallow wells because it may be polluted with toxic agriculture chemicals. A recent survey in Ontario showed that one third of the farm wells were polluted.

Right here in our own community, where there is a high water table, some farmers won't use the water because they are afraid it is polluted. What does this all mean particularly to people who have food and chemical allergies. It will be a nightmare and there is little doubt health costs will soar as a result. The question is – will Canada's 295



newly elected Members of Parliament pass legislation to bar genetically engineered food products from entering Canada and regulate the industry to protect our health and environment or will the chemical lobby continue to dominate our national decision making process?

February 4, 2002 Davidson Leader

I recently received the following letter (dated Jan. 3, 2002) from Bill DeVos of DeVos Brokers and Consultants Inc. of Edmonton, Alta. Who are specializing in seed potatoes.

*Dear Sir,*

*I read an article about you in a health magazine. My comments would be that I agree that some organic farming is feasible but to feed the world we need to go with GMOs. It is very shortsighted not to look at modern technology. May I suggest that you read the book: Saving the World With Pesticides and Plastic by Dennis Avery. If you read that with an open mind you will change your mind, I am sure of that.*  
*Bill DeVos.*

Dear Mr. DeVos,

Thank you for your letter. I am quite aware of Dennis Avery's book. Shortly after it was published (I don't remember the date) I was invited by CBC Radio's phone-in noon program to debate the topic of pesticides and plastic with Avery. I was supposed to receive the book three days ahead of time so I would have time to read it. Fortunately or unfortunately (I still don't know which) I was handed the book when I went to the CBC building about 15 minutes before we were to go on air. It didn't really matter because listeners phoning in capably debated and showed how ridiculous Avery's theories were. He proposed food production zones where pesticides would be used in large amounts on food grown in that particular area. Then he was going to have environmental reserves for wildlife. Avery didn't seem to understand that when birds or wildlife moved around the country they would not be able to read signs that designated certain areas for food growing and others as wildlife reserves. Avery certainly isn't a scientist or even a farmer. He is really a fiction writer. I tried to read his book following the CBC program. It is full of fantasies and information unrelated to farming, soil and agriculture. I never completed the book because I couldn't take any of his theories seriously. Avery is a public relations person for the transnational drug and chemical companies. Their purpose is to sell lots of pesticides that make you ill and then sell you lots of drugs that you hope will make you well again. This may surprise you but the purpose of all this is to make profits for the transnationals, not to feed the world's hungry.

Here in Saskatchewan we already have what Avery is promoting. Cancer and agricultural chemicals are our main growth industries.

Saskatchewan uses one- third of the pesticides used in Canada and we have the highest rate of breast and cervix cancer in Canada and the second highest rate of prostate cancer in men. Here in this small community four infants had cancer in one year.

Avery says pesticides and plastics are the only way to feed the world. Here in Saskatchewan we have about one million people and over 40 per cent of the cultivated land in Canada and we are not feeding ourselves. Line ups at food banks are getting longer every year. A year ago farmers were driving 70 miles to the Regina Food Bank for

food. In many instances farm men and women work off the farm to help finance the farm. We already have what Avery is proposing.

Unfortunately, you don't seem to understand the real reason for GMOs. It has nothing to do with agriculture or feeding the hungry world. It is for the purpose of transnational corporate control of agriculture. Perhaps you haven't heard about the class action that the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate (SOD) filed against Monsanto and Aventis corporations on Jan. 10 for:

1. Seeking compensation for damage caused by genetically engineered canola polluting organic canola crops in Saskatchewan, and
2. SOD is seeking an injunction to prevent Monsanto from introducing genetically engineered wheat in Saskatchewan.

There is a war going on here for control of farms between organic farmers and transnational corporations. This battle is not just in Canada but it is world wide. Obviously you have decided to line up on the side of the transnational corporations or you don't understand the issues.

I am enclosing a copy of the Jan. 10, 2002 SOD news release and if you actually see the "light" as a result of this letter and other enclosed material, send your donations to the Organic Agriculture Protection Fund. If the family farm doesn't survive, your career as an agriculture consultant may not last for very long either.

Elmer Laird, president,  
Back to the Farm Research Foundation

August 2001 *alive* #226

I am a 77-year-old retired farmer. After 32 years of organic farming I have leased my farm to the Back to the Farm Research Foundation, established as a certified organic research and demonstration farm. I am manager.

At the age of 18, I enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force in World War II as an air frame mechanic and served for three years. I thought it was the war to end all wars. It wasn't. We are currently battling World War III. The fight worldwide for the control of agriculture is between transnational corporations like Monsanto and certified organic farmers. The torpedoes of this particular war are genetically engineered crops (GMOs).

Transnational corporations have a policy of trying to exploit something as long as it can be exploited. When it's no longer exploitable, they abandon the project and move investors' money into something else. (They are also aware that if all farmers go organic, that would be the end of their chemical businesses.) Organic farmers are practising good soil improvement and conservation policies that will rebuild the soil and produce healthy food for future generations. Consumers will be big losers if the transnationals win this war because the result will be a polluted environment, polluted water and polluted food. It's a war for survival.

### **The Farmers' Union**

I have recently written to Mr Darren Qualman, executive secretary of the National Farmers Union, asking him to co-ordinate or provide leadership for the many Canadian organizations that are opposed to GMOs. The National Farmers Union is the logical organization because they are the only direct dues-paying farm policy organization in Canada with a national charter that can provide leadership to focus on the GMO issue. They have regional offices at Arthurette, New Brunswick, Summerside, Prince Edward Island, Ompah, Ontario, Winnipeg, Manitoba and Edmonton, Alberta in addition to the national office in Saskatoon. The National Farmers Union also has an excellent anti-GMO policy. In addition, farmer members are free to develop their own policies at local meetings and national conferences. They aren't exposed to or intimidated by corporate lobbyists, as are politicians.

It's time the NFU led this battle by calling together "fellow travellers" who are concerned about GMOs. I don't know who they all are, but Saskatchewan Organic Directorate (SOD) has a very strong anti-GMO policy. The National Union of Public and General Employees is another-it represents government employees in all provinces except Quebec.

The Company of Canadians, the Canadian Wheat Board, all environmental organizations in Canada and even the Pope have issued very strong statements against GMOs. However, the battle is more obvious in Europe, Africa and Asia than here. Unfortunately, both the Canadian and US federal governments are committed to GMO production.

Currently, the Saskatchewan provincial government supports GMO farming and with the help of the federal government pumping money into the province, are trying to turn Saskatchewan into the GMO capital of the world.

In the US many state governments are resisting GMOs. The Minneapolis, Minnesota city council is a leader of municipal governments in the fight. The council is demanding the labelling of all GMO products and has also recommended that all eating establishments in Minneapolis offer organic foods on their menu as an alternative.

### **The Family Farm**

In the short time I have left on earth, I plan to work with individuals and organizations that are committed to the following policies and goals:

- The survival of the family farm as a basic unit of agricultural production.
- To promote certified organic agricultural production, produce the healthiest food possible and clean up our polluted water and air.
- To promote good soil conservation and improve organic farming practices.
- To develop self-sufficient farms, communities, provinces and nations.
- To get a moratorium on GMOs. Also support the labeling of all GMO products on the market today.
- Support rescinding the Plant Breeders Rights Act.
- Support farmers' rights to save their own seed.
- Support rescinding the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).
- Support a national medicare system that recognizes the basic foundation of good health with certified organic food and pure water and good nutrition.

The GMO war is on! If you try to avoid it, it will be at your own peril. I sincerely hope alive readers will enlist on the anti-GMO side. The Plant Breeders Rights Act (by permitting GMOs), FTA and NAFTA are all a violation of Canadian sovereignty by causing farmers to lose their rights to save their own seeds.

### ***Elmer Laird Leads the Way***

*Elmer joined the Saskatchewan Farmers Union, a family organization, in 1950 and became a director of his district in 1952. He served two five-year terms and attended local and provincial meetings developing farm policy for the betterment of agriculture.*

*He was a founding member of the National Farmers Union. He is still a member and frequently writes to them about farm policy and organic, health and environmental policies.*

*In 1973, he became president of the Back to the Farm Research Foundation, which in 1983 sponsored the Canadian Organic Producer Marketing Co-operative Ltd. It was the first organic marketing co-op in Canada.*

*Over the years he has worked with thousands of farmers and farm leaders, both men and women, to improve agriculture policies and programs. For over 50 years, along with the Farmers Movement, he has helped build co-operatives, credit unions and worked in general for the benefit of the family farmer—men, women and young people.*

November 14, 1994

Both the plants and seeds of the herbicide resistant canolas being developed by the Monsanto and AgroEvro (formerly Hoechst) chemical companies using the biotechnology research process may be listed as noxious weeds in the not too distant future.

The Noxious Weed Act states,

“A Noxious Weed means a plant or the seeds of a plant listed in the schedule and includes the plant or seeds of a plant that the Minister declares by regulation to be a Noxious Weed”. In practical terms a Noxious Weed is a weed that is difficult to control, it volunteers quite readily, its seeds can be spread by wind, water, domestic animals, farm equipment or Wildlife. It may be an annual, bi-annual or perennial and is difficult to control by either cultivation or chemicals.

Some agricultural scientists, farmers and environmentalists are becoming increasingly alarmed about the direction agricultural biotechnology is taking and the products it is proposing to develop.

Journalist D’arce McMillian in an article in the Saturday, October, 29, 1994 edition of the LeaderPost, titled “Romanow Interest Company” describes the efforts of Premier Roy Romanow and Economic Development Minister, Dwain Lingenfelter to encourage AgroEvro to proceed with the research to develop herbicide resistant canola. The article goes on to say that the Monsanto Chemical company is working on their own variety.

Scientists and chemical farmers are concerned about the development of herbicide resistant canola because it means a new type of plant that is very difficult to kill. Canola is a plant that volunteers very readily. It could easily volunteer in the stubble crop the following year and choke out the crop, depending on how vigorous the crop seeded the following year is.

Environmentalists are concerned about the development of any herbicide resistant plant because the implication is that more herbicides will be used. The Alberta government warned farmers last year about the possibility of shallow wells being contaminated with pesticides or herbicides and about one third of Ontario’s farm wells are already polluted. Federal Environment frequently finds pesticide residues in Saskatchewan surface water. Farm dugouts are never tested for pesticide residues by the Provincial Laboratory, Environmentalists believe pesticide use should be eliminated or reduced to protect precious water resources before they are all contaminated.

The Federal Government does not have regulations that control the development and use of biotechnology in agriculture research. They have promised them late this year or early next year. It is difficult to understand why Saskatchewan’s Premier and Minister of Economic Development would commit University and Government research money to develop herbicide resistant canola without examining or evaluating the consequence. It even becomes more difficult to understand when they say they are making a major effort to balance the budget.

Perhaps it is because they are committed (although very few chemical farmers are aware of it) to their policy to support chemical agriculture at all cost. Very few people realize how powerful the chemical lobby is. The question is what can farmers do about the impending threat of herbicide resistant canola or other herbicide resistant crops in the

future that may be as difficult to control as present noxious weeds? They can refuse to grow them or they might decide to elect a government that would abandon its agricultural chemical policies or they might try organic farming, or all three.



December 19, 1994 Davidson Leader

How do you convince chemical farmers there is a very powerful chemical lobby that has a significant effect on their farming decisions and way of life? It is about as difficult as trying to climb Mt. Everest without oxygen as it is to convince them the lobby exists.

Until very recently the lobby has exerted its influence in a very subtle way. It has made research grants to invited farmers to lunch, given them gifts for coming and told them about the magic qualities of their products. They have kept the price of agriculture chemicals to the farmers sufficiently high so they would have a very generous budget for advertising and lobbying to convince the farmer that agriculture chemicals are not only necessary but safe to use.

Since Monsanto and AgrEvo (formerly Hoechst) have announced they are developing herbicide resistant canola, the powerful lobby is much more visible chemical farmers who grow grain oil seeds and pulse crops are very concerned that herbicide resistant canola will be in effect another noxious weed. Zero till farmers will be an impossible position because they rely exclusively on chemicals for weed control. Many agricultural scientists, researchers and extension workers are concerned because they see the implications of developing herbicide resistant plants. Environmentalists and many consumers are concerned about the larger volumes of chemicals that may be used that will further pollute our soil, water and food.

Unfortunately to date there are no federal guidelines to control the direction of biotechnology research and the products that are produced as a result of it. The federal government is working on guidelines but there is little doubt the chemical lobby is working against having meaningful guidelines.

Monsanto has developed BST, the hormone that is injected into dairy cows to increase milk production. Consumers in both Canada and the U.S.A. are alarmed about this type of production and the fact that there are no labelling requirements. Dairy farmers in the main are opposed to it. They say it shortens the productive life of the cow. There is no shortage of dairy cows and it causes infections which forces the dairy farmer to buy more drugs. Incidentally, Monsanto is a drug company and can supply them. Canada has banned the use of BST for one year, thanks to the efforts of Liberal M.P. Wayne Easter who is a Prince Edward Island dairy farmer and a member of the Agricultural Committee of the House of Commons. However, Monsanto is using all its political and public relations resources to force BST on the market.

Most chemical farmers do not realize that as a result of early efforts of the chemical lobby the federal and all provincial governments have had policies in place for many years to promote only chemical agriculture. Agrologists, biologists or people in any other discipline that work in agriculture research extension policy or administration must promote chemical agriculture only or they will be out of work. That is government policy. It is only when you start organic farming that you realize the implications of the policy. Organic farmers have to adjust chemical agricultural information to meet their needs or rely on other organic farmers for information.

People in many other professions are afraid of the chemical lobby and stay out of its way. For example if you go to our RM. office there is a publication entitled "The Farm

Safety Audit” available at no charge. It is produced by the Agriculture Health and Safety Network and your rural municipal council. It has a nice big picture of a field sprayer on the cover and contains information on the safety of operating all farm equipment except the sprayer. It is amazing that in this age of chemical agriculture it doesn’t recognize the sprayer as a source of farm fatalities and accidents. On page one there are charts showing causes of fatal and non-fatal farm accidents in Saskatchewan from 1983-93. However, it doesn’t recognize that in that ten year period there were any deaths or injuries from the use of agricultural chemicals. It is obvious the chemical lobby has influenced the material in this publication.

Over the last six or seven years there have been record numbers of farm bankruptcies. However, I have never heard of a chemical company going bankrupt during that period. Non-farm taxpayers have been concerned about the large subsidies paid to farmers. When farmers are going broke and the agricultural chemical industry is expanding it seems obvious who is reaping the benefits of the subsidies. Some consumers are aware that the subsidies are going to buy larger volumes of chemicals that are polluting our water, air, soil and food. The question is, how are we going to eliminate the control of governments by powerful lobbies like the chemical lobby and return democratic decision making to M.P.’s and M.L.A.’s whom we have elected to do the job.

March 28, 1994 Davidson Leader

Re: Open Letter

March 21, 1994

Ms. Sheila Copps, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Environment  
Ms. Diane Marleau, Federal Minister National Health and Welfare  
Mr. Ralph Goodale, Federal Minister of Agriculture  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario

Dear Mesdames and Sir:

I respectfully request that you immediately declare a moratorium on biotechnology research until the federal government establishes national guidelines to prevent further pollution of the environment. The guidelines should guarantee Canadian citizens that biotechnological research only be permitted where the end product is guaranteed to be "environmentally friendly."

An article in the March 2, 1994, edition of the Saskatoon Star Phoenix (copy attached) entitled "Genetically Altered Flax Coming in '95" reports that

"Crop scientists at the University of Saskatchewan will be making the world's first commercial, genetically manipulated crop available to farmers next year. FP967 is the designation for a line of flax engineered by scientists at the crop development centre. It is designed specifically to grow on farmland with high herbicide residues."

The article concludes, "Now farmers have the ability to return herbicide-polluted farmland to productivity."

Another article in the same edition by journalist Dan Zakreski said in part "Farm chemical multinational Monsanto, for instance, has genetically engineered a variety of canola that is resistant to its herbicide Round Up."

The end product of this kind of research is unacceptable. Our soil, surface water, ground water in some instances, and food is already polluted with toxic pesticides. This type of biotechnological research is designed so environmentally- mindless, money-hungry, transnational chemical companies can sell more chemicals. Obviously, they are not concerned about conserving Canadian soils. When our soils are destroyed from toxic pesticides, they will move on to polluting soils in other nations.

If biotechnology is going to serve a useful purpose, it should & be developing strains of food crops (with a great deal of caution) that will compete with weeds or be resistant to pests (e.g. Sirius peas are resistant to grasshoppers).

I trust you will give this matter your immediate attention.

Sincerely,  
Elmer Laird, President

April 30, 2001 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:

Damn Qualman, executive director, presidents, vice-presidents and directors of the National Farmers Union:

Re: Action on the genetically modified (GM) foods issue.

Obviously we are at war. I don't know whether to consider it a continuation of the Second World War or should it be referred to as World War III. The war I refer to is the war that is going on world wide for the control of agriculture between transnational corporations like Monsanto and certified organic family farmers. The weapons of this particular war are genetically engineered crops. The transnationals are obviously using GMOs to pollute organic farmers' fields and make their crops unsaleable as certified organic. Conventional farmers are losing overseas markets too as a result of genetic pollution. All consumers world wide and many family farmers who are still using GM crops are caught in the middle and many are unaware the war is going on but will be eventual victims of the war if it is lost.

It is hard to say how long the transnationals have been aware that if certified organic farmers won the war they would no longer have markets for pesticides and herbicides, they would not control the seed and ultimately the family farms and they would no longer collect royalties on acres seeded to GM crops. The quality of food would improve, food and water would no longer be polluted and with toxic pesticides and the sales of drugs would drop. As a result transnational corporations would lose pesticide and drug sales and royalties and their shareholders would lose large volumes of money and the corporations would face financial ruin.

Pesticides were developed for biological controls in the first and second world wars. There was no concerns about safety (and there still isn't) because they were designed as weapons of war. Following the Second World War some smart industrialist decided to market them for "peace time" uses and have been extremely successful for over 50 years. However, today the organic movement is rapidly moving ahead and the fight is on. I am writing to you for two reasons:

1. because you have an excellent anti-GMO policy that demands a moratorium on all GMO crops, and,
2. because you are the only farm policy organization that has a national charter and a direct dues paying membership and has the creditability to provide leadership on an issue of this magnitude.

In addition farmer members—at local meetings and national conferences—are free to develop their own policy.

They are not exposed or intimidated by lobbyists like politicians are. I think it is time the NFU led this battle or war by calling together "fellow travellers" who are concerned about GMOs. I don't know who they all are but Saskatchewan Organic Development (SOD) has a very strong anti-GMO policy. The National Union which represents government employees in all provinces but Quebec, the Company of Canadians, all environmental organizations in Canada and the Pope have issued very

strong statements against GMOs. The war is more obvious in other parts of the world than here.

In India farmers tore up Monsanto's test plots and facilities. Bruno-area farmer Percy Schmeiser was in England the week of April 16 to 20. He reported that there are many certified organic farmers in Wales. They supply large volumes of organic food to London merchants.

Monsanto wants to establish a GMO wheat test plot in Wales. London merchants have told the farmers in Wales that if they let Monsanto establish the test plot they won't buy their organic products any more. Percy Schmeiser because he took action in a Saskatoon Federal Court to defend farmers' rights to save their own seed is in demand as a speaker at conferences all over the world. He is in British Columbia this week and is going to Ethiopia next week. While in India last October, he received the Gandhi award for non-violent action for fighting for farmers' rights to save their own seed. Farmers worldwide believe they have a basic right to save their own seed and in many parts of the world are engaged in a major struggle for their rights to save it. Unfortunately, here in Saskatchewan both our federal and provincial government are supporting GMOs. In fact, former premier Roy Romanow and Wheat Board Minister Ralph Goodale have been pouring taxpayers' money into Saskatoon to try to make it the biotechnology capital of the world. Prince Charles, who is an organic farmer, and is opposed to GMOs wants to meet Percy Schmeiser during his visit to Saskatchewan. Prince Charles' advance agent has been trying to arrange a meeting with the Saskatchewan protocol office (under the minister of Intergovernmental Affairs) to meet Schmeiser.

The provincial government because they support GMOs are doing everything to stop the meeting. We will all know on April 30<sup>th</sup>, whether Prince Charles or the Calvert government won the diplomatic battle.

Urbanites are showing action and expressing concern in very forceful ways. Bob Belfour, vice- president of SOD, received the following e-mail recently from Inforganics issued by Terry Gips, president of the Alliance for Sustainability in Minneapolis. He said:

*"I wanted to share some great news with you. On Aug. 25, 2000, the Minneapolis City Council voted 11-1 in support of our proposed resolution by council member Jim Niland to have Minneapolis give preference to organic food vendors for all of its contracts and request that state and national government bodies require GMO labelling, safety testing and have liability assigned to the commercial developers of genetically engineered foods. It also urges the Minneapolis School District to consider offering certified organic lunches as an option. This is indeed an historic step forward for our movement and represents an extraordinary victory, something that would have been nearly unthinkable perhaps even a year ago. It shows what can happen when we join together and use our power. And the fact that so many City Council members actively support the bill and actually buy organic is a tribute to the years of education work our movement has been undertaking. So, congratulations for everything our organic farmers, co-ops, businesses, nonprofits, religious groups, government agencies and concerned citizens have been doing."*

I don't know what municipal politicians in Canada are going to do but I have attempted to sell (unsuccessfully) certified organic food to both the Saskatchewan Legislature's restaurants and the five restaurants in the House of Commons, but our politicians obviously don't care about the quality of food they eat.

Obviously the transnational corporations' lobby has dominated their taste buds. I sincerely hope you start to reemit and assemble all groups in Canada that are opposed to GMOs immediately. I know this is going to be a big job. I also know this will be the biggest war the NFU has ever fought to protect the family farm. However, fortunately we have lots of allies. We didn't start the war, but we must finish it.

Elmer Laird, president,  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

November 2001 *alive* #229

### **The Organic Transition**

The Taylor family of Kenaston, Saskatchewan, is taking certified organic farming very seriously. They are demonstrating leadership in the industry and are helping to promote institutional change.

Many people have the impression that organic farming is all done on small-sized farms. However, the Taylor certified organic farm is 1,200 hectares (3,000 acres) in size—one of the largest in the province. It's located in the beautiful "Allan Hills," about 80 kilometres southeast of Saskatoon. Growths of native poplar, willows, chokecherries and Saskatoon berries contribute to the natural beauty of the area.

Arnold Taylor and his wife, Sharon, have farmed in this location since 1972 and have raised six children there. Along with their son, Doug, daughter-in-law Tracy and their three children—Calvin, Kaitlyn and Morgan—they occupy the two homes on the farmyard. Doug is the only farmer. He says growing certified organic crops is a real challenge. It's one he obviously enjoys.

The Taylors' farm has been certified organic since 1991. In addition to the challenges of growing certified crops, the Taylor farm is in the drought area that is affecting western Saskatchewan and large areas of Alberta this year. Arnold suspects that although his yield will be down, his crops have survived the drought just as well or better than some of the chemical farms in the district.

In this crop year, the Taylors have about 720 hectares in cereals, oilseeds and legumes, 320 hectares in plowdown clover and lentils for soil improvement and 60 hectares of summerfallow. They grow spelt and kamut (grain varieties that go back to ancient times and are grown for people like me who are allergic to wheat), Canada prairie spring (white) wheat, hard red spring wheat, three kinds of lentils, oats, flax, clover, peas, fall rye and mustard—a total of 14 crops. They also raise a certified organic herd of 70 cows.

### **Saskatchewan Organic Industry**

There are about 1,000 certified organic farmers in Saskatchewan cultivating about 400,000 hectares in total. There are 10 voluntary certification organizations in the province. The Saskatchewan Organic Directorate is the umbrella organization that presently represents six of the eight Organic Crop Improvement Association (OCIA) chapters.

In addition to OCIA, there is the Canadian Organic Certification Co-operative Ltd (COCC), which represents processors, marketers, consumers and individual certified organic farmers (members-at-large).

The Taylors are very active in the certification organizations that organic farmers have

created. Arnold and Doug are members of OCIA Chapter Five, the Canadian Organic Livestock Association (COLA) and the Marysburg Organic Producers Inc, which is an organic marketing group. In addition to all their other involvement in organic movements, they recently provided a full-day organic field trip to a busload of 55 certified organic farmers from all over Saskatchewan who toured their farm. Sharon, Tracy and some neighbouring women supplied a wonderful organic supper on a beautiful evening. Doug took the guests for a ride in a horse-drawn buggy around the farm.

Arnold is the president of the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate (SOD). He is also a member of the elections committee of OCIA International. He says that under present conditions, interest in organic farming is growing rapidly. Chemical farming is not working. Weeds have built up a resistance to herbicides and the cost of commercial fertilizer is soaring. "Chemicals are like booze. Farmers need a support group to help make the change to organic," Arnold said. He is hoping that consumers who want unpolluted food will start supporting chemical farmers to help make the change.

### **Organic Farmers to Take Class Action**

The Saskatchewan government passed legislation in their last session that will permit citizen groups to take "class action" as of January 2002. Arnold said his organization, the SOD, is seriously considering taking class action against transnational corporations who are promoting GMOs. He said, "The widespread use of GMO-canola developed by transnational corporations such as Monsanto has resulted in contamination of the environment with seed and pollen from this crop. The contamination has progressed to the extent that very few organic farmers in Saskatchewan will consider growing canola for fear of losing sales and even their certification. It has become next to impossible to certify any canola being grown in Saskatchewan as being GMO-free. Therefore, as a result of the unconfined release of GMO-canola into the Saskatchewan environment, canola has all but been removed from the crop rotations of organic farmers. This has caused great harm to organic farmers because organic farming methods rely on diverse use of crop rotations to control weeds and pests and to build soil fertility.

"Our members' legal, equitable and statutory rights have been infringed and they are entitled to be compensated for their losses. Our members feel particularly threatened by and vulnerable to the proposed introduction of GMO-wheat in the province of Saskatchewan. If wheat goes the way of canola it is reasonably certain that the livelihood and way of life of organic farmers in Saskatchewan will be destroyed.

"Our members are gravely concerned that secret test plots of GMO- wheat are already being grown and tested at various sites in Saskatchewan this year. It is imperative that immediate measures be taken to ensure that pollen and seed cannot stray from these crops and contaminate the environment."

The Saskatchewan Organic Directorate has set up the "SOD Organic Agriculture Protection Fund." The address is Box 1, Lisieux, SK, SOH 2R0. Arnold hopes the SOD Organic Protection Fund will receive wide public support so a possible class action can



be launched early in the new year. The group is also looking at the possibility of filing an injunction to prevent the introduction of GMO-wheat and is interested in protecting the rights of both organic farmers and consumers.

January 2002 *alive* #231

### Organic Group Takes Up Arms

On Oct. 12, 2001, Arnold Taylor, president of the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate (SOD), announced the directorate's intention to take legal action against those responsible for introducing genetically engineered (GE) canola into Saskatchewan and to hold them accountable for crop losses and damages. A press conference was held at Cedar Lodge on Blackstrap Lake, 55 kilometres southeast of Saskatoon, following a two-day conference during which the SOD board of directors finalized its plans. Taylor also said the SOD hopes to seek an injunction against the introduction of GE wheat.

Accompanying Taylor to the presentation were Debbie Miller, administrator of SOD and president of Organic Crop Improvement Association International, the world's largest organic certification organization; Marc Loiselle, co-chair of SOD's research and development committee; and the SOD's legal council, Terry J. Zakreski.

The Saskatchewan Organic Directorate is an umbrella organization representing six of the 10 voluntary certification organizations in the province, in addition to processors, marketers and individual farmers. Merv Ermel is president of the Canadian Organic Certification Co-Operative, which is another certification organization that presently does not belong to SOD. Ermel said, "We will certainly support SOD in the class action." It is very likely that the other three groups will join the class action, too.

There are about 1,000 certified organic farmers in Saskatchewan who farm about one million acres of land. They grow a wide variety of crops. Most of the cereal grains, oilseeds and legumes are marketed to Europe and the United States.

The Canadian Wheat Board (CWB), which markets all wheat and barley grown on the prairies, did a survey of their international customers last year and found that over 80 per cent rejected GE wheat and barley. In July 2001, the CWB, the National Farmers Union, the Council of Canadians, 220 Canadian environmental and consumer organizations, 50 Canadian professionals (individuals) and 60 international organizations wrote a joint letter to the prime minister opposing the introduction of GE wheat. Nevertheless, federal energy minister Ralph Goodale and the Saskatchewan NDP government are pouring money into biotechnology in Saskatoon. They want to make Saskatoon the biotechnology capital of the world. Goodale is also federal minister in charge of the CWB and will not accept the advice to oppose the registration of GE wheat. It is reported that Monsanto had 40 to 50 secret GE-wheat test plots on the prairies in the 2001 growing season.

Saskatchewan Organic Directorate legal council Terry Zakreski told the press that in addition to the class action suit against transnational companies selling and promoting GE seed, the directorate will also be doing research to find out if federal regulatory agencies should be added to the list of those being sued.

The SOD has two friends in the federal cabinet now. Health Minister Allan Rock recently

announced that he supports the compulsory labelling of all GE foods. Further, the Honourable Charles Caccia, chairman of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, recommended in his 2000 report on pesticides that all Canadian farmers should be subsidized to make the transition to organic agriculture. He also supports much more organic agricultural research. Sadly, the Caccia private member's bill to label all genetically modified organisms (GMOs) was struck down in October 2001.

Unfortunately, when the Mulroney government passed the Plant Breeders' Rights Act in 1991, it gave transnationals like Monsanto the rights to develop and patent seed and to charge farmers a royalty for using it. As a result, farmers have lost their historic right to save their own seed and Canadians have lost political control of their agriculture. The main result of GE seed and the Plant Breeders' Rights Act is the rapid transfer of control of the family farm to the transnational drug and chemical corporations.

This is what the lawsuit is all about. Organic farmers have no alternative but to take class action to protect the family farm system of agriculture production and prevent corporate takeover of agriculture. Please support the class action suit initiated by the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate by sending your donation to the Organic Agriculture Trust Fund, Box 1, Lisieux, SK, S0H 2R0.

December 13, 2004 Davidson Leader

### **Government should review policy on biotechnology**

Open letter to Premier Lorne Calvert and Minister of Agriculture Mark Whartman

Thank you for your letter of Nov. 18, 2004. You said, “The Government of Saskatchewan believes biotechnology will deliver economic benefits, but we also recognize that consumer safety and environmental protection must come first.

Our vision is for a green and prosperous economy for our province, and biotechnology is an important new tool for our scientists and farmers. Our policy is to support and invest in the development of bio-tech products in a manner that reflects a balance between food safety and industry growth. Such development must also provide a clear benefit to both producers and consumers. It is for that reason that the Government of Saskatchewan opposed GMO wheat – it did not provide a clear benefit and would, in fact, have had a negative impact on our industry.”

Perhaps you should review your policy on biotechnology. I attended the National Farmers Union’s 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention at the Quality Inn in Saskatoon. On Friday afternoon, Nov. 19 at 2:30, David Suzuki, host of *The Nature of Things*, was the guest speaker. In an article in the Nov. 20 edition of *the StarPhoenix*, entitled Professors Sold Out, journalist Lana Haight reported on his speech as follows:

University professors including those at the University of Saskatchewan are selling their souls to corporate interests and are becoming cheerleaders for the biotechnology industry, says a prominent Canadian scientist.

“Academics receiving grant money from these various industries become defenders of these industries and no longer are capable of looking at the issues from all sides,” David Suzuki said.

“It grieves me, therefore, as a geneticist, to have to say that I am appalled in the way that my fellow scientists have rushed to proclaim the enormous economic promise of genetic engineering with almost no serious discussion about the other side, which would be the enormous potential costs.”

Haight went on to say: Suzuki – author, speaker and host of CBC’s *The Nature of Things* – was in Saskatoon for the National Farmers Union’s 35<sup>th</sup> annual meeting. It was a love-in from the start. The standing-room-only crowd of more than 500 people gave Suzuki at least three standing ovations during his one-hour presentation and the question-and-answer session that followed.

Suzuki pointed to professors at the colleges of agriculture at the universities of Saskatchewan and Guelph who were critical of a 1989 Nature of Things program on organic farming.

“They said that we were not scientific, that there was an attack on the chemical industry,” said Suzuki in an interview afterward.

He maintained universities have sold their souls to industry.

“They have allowed the private sector in. Their faculty members who have tenure, they are taking private grants so they now have a vested interest in the company that is giving them money. Do you think they will speak freely? If you get a grant from Monsanto (an agricultural biotechnology company), do you think you will speak out and

criticize Monsanto? You become like a tobacco industry spokesman and I don't think that belongs in the university," he said.

Suzuki told the crowd that scientists are not adhering to basic scientific principals and that they are drawing false conclusions.

"Anybody that comes in and tells you, 'We know enough to be able to manage (biotechnology). Don't worry about it. Trust us,' is either unbelievably uninformed or deliberately lying. We just don't know," he said.

Canadians are the guinea pigs in a huge experiment and they don't even realize it as they unknowingly consume foods that are genetically engineered, according to Suzuki.

"We're not giving informed consent. We're just being rammed into the experiment without any choice."

Suzuki said he believes benefits of genetic engineering may eventually be found, but the science shouldn't be used in everyday applications until those benefits are conclusive.

"The science of DNA is far too young to think about taking it out and risking the natural world or even adjacent farmers' fields or our own bodies or other species."

Well, gentlemen, Dr. Suzuki graduated as a geneticist in either 1960 or 1961 and has had a lot of experience. Suzuki is right, the scientists have made the decision to go ahead with biotechnology without consulting with farmers or consumers what it is all about. I think when you, Mr. Calvert, make a decision as important to society as you have, you should consult everyone. I am sorry I didn't see any NDP politicians or policy people at the NFU convention.

Elmer Laird, president  
Back To The Farm  
Research Foundation

May 19, 2003 Davidson Leader

### **Government taking action to violate human rights of Europeans**

Open letter to:

Premier Lorne Calvert and Provincial Opposition Leader Elwin Hermanson

RE: The Canadian Government with Saskatchewan's support is taking action to violate the human rights of Europeans by forcing them to eat food of their choice.

On May 14 CBC Radio news (Regina) reported that Canada was joining the United States, Argentina and Egypt to take Europe to the WTO (World Trade Organization) to force them to accept GMO (genetically modified organisms) grains, oil seeds and legumes. Pierre Pettigrew, Canada's Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, made the announcement. The press reported that Saskatchewan Agriculture Minister Clay Serby supported it. Later in the same news cast, there was a report that Canada's canola sales had dropped from five million tonnes in 2001 to 1.5 million tonnes in 2002.

Up until now many farmers, particularly chemical farmers, have not been concerned about the fact that both federal and provincial governments support chemical agriculture only. Now it is abundantly clear that Saskatchewan political parties have abandoned support of the family farm and are supporting the transnational corporations and chemical agriculture. I think when you call the impending election, Mr. Calvert, that it will be abundantly clear to all farmers and other interested parties that the New Democratic Party that in the past traditionally supported the family farm has abandoned their former policy and are waiting for the transnational corporations to take complete control of farming. The Saskatchewan Party is the "new kid on the block" and obviously doesn't have a history of support for the family farm.

Since the Second World War Canada has always made a strong stand to support human rights through the United Nations all over the world. This action they are taking now to go to the WTO to take away European rights to eat the food they choose is a violation of the rights of Europeans and a complete reversal of Canada's stand on human rights.

Even some Americans do not support their government. Liane Casten, environmental journalist from Chicago, is furious that the American government would attempt to shove GMO foods down anyone's throat. In fact, in the world of commerce, the best policy is to produce the type and quality of food the consumer wants to eat. That will lead to successful marketing. It is a known fact that GMOs have nothing to do with food quality or volume of production. They are being promoted so the transnational corporations will be able to continue to sell large volumes of herbicides and pesticides in the interest of corporate profits.

On May 16 Percy Schmeiser, Bruno-area farmer and farm activist was spending a day at home following a speaking tour of Italy. He was receiving congratulations from all over the world because he has just received word that his case with Monsanto will be heard by the Supreme Court of Canada at a later date. Actually the announcement was made last week. However, I didn't hear of either of your parties issuing a press release to congratulate him or support him on his achievement. In fact, he has been travelling the

world speaking about farmers' rights to save their own seed. He has spoken to several of the state legislatures in the U.S. but the Saskatchewan Legislature obviously has never shown any interest in hearing him. They are obviously not interested in farmers' rights to save their own seed. He is receiving request from all over the world from organizations, who want to appear on his behalf as intervenors when ever the Supreme Court of Canada hears the case. It is now abundantly obvious that if the Canadian and Saskatchewan governments appear it will be on the side of the transnational corporation Monsanto. After a day at home Percy Schmeiser is off to the biodevastation conference in St. Louis, Miss. (the home of Monsanto). The conference will be discussing the devastating effects of genetic engineering on people, domestic animals, wildlife and environment, e.g. what happens when a pregnant woman eats food that is engineered to produce birth control or contraception.

What happens when someone has already thin blood eats food that is "engineered" to thin the blood, or when someone is worried about blood clots eats food that is "engineered" to create blood clots. There indeed is a bunch of mad scientists employed by transnational corporations that have no concept of food safety or human concerns about food safety or the environment.

From 1939 to 1945 Canada was part of the allied forces that were fighting to protect the human rights of citizens of many European countries. Now our Canadian government has decided that many of these same people do not have a right to decide what the quality of the food is they will eat. Well gentlemen, there is an old saying, "Nero fiddled while Rome burned." I think you are doing the same thing.

Elmer Laird, president,  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

## PLANT BREEDERS' RIGHTS ACT

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October 18, 1999 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:

Federal Agriculture Minister Lyle Vanclief, former agriculture minister and retired senator Eugene Whelan;

Re: Question What happened to the research on perennial wheat that fixed its own nitrogen:

In the early 1960s Agriculture Canada plant breeders and soil scientists were talking about the fact that in 25 years plant breeders would have developed a variety of perennial wheat that would fix its own nitrogen (similar to alfalfa). There is no doubt that by now if they had continued their work many other cereal grains would be perennials that fixed their own nitrogen as well. Perhaps what we consider as today's low prices for cereal grains is not a result of the international market place but is because of poor misguided science at home.

Mr. Whelan I know that you are aware of the boondoggle you have caused as a result of promoting the *Plant Breeders Rights* legislation when you were minister of agriculture in the Trudeau government. Although the Mulroney government passed the legislation in 1990 your party initiated the program and supported it all along the way. When I look back it is amazing to me (and I am sure it is to you too) that a left-wing Liberal government of the Pearson and Trudeau era that gave Canada socialist type of legislation like the national Medicare legislation and national pension plan legislation would abandon plant breeding to the transnational corporations.

Before *Plant Breeders Rights* legislation we had dedicated plant breeders working with farmers to develop better plant varieties for the benefit of the consuming public at home and abroad. All research at that time was carried out at Agriculture Canada research stations or at Canadian universities.

Now instead of developing perennial crops that fix their own nitrogen we have transnationals like Monsanto developing terminator genes so farmers will have to buy all their seed every year and use the company's chemicals to get the crop to grow. Genetic engineering is being promoted for corporate control, not to feed the hungry world.

Today here in Saskatchewan we have farmers growing canola paying a \$15 per acre seed royalty which is about four times our municipal and school tax rate per acre. This cost is levied directly on the farmer for some crops today but if the *Plant Breeders Rights* legislation is not rescinded or reversed to the former system farmers will be paying that excessive cost on seed royalties for all crops. Previously Canadian taxpayers paid the cost of plant breeding and shared in the benefits by enjoying higher quality food.

In our telephone conversation late last spring Mr. Whelan, I asked you how we could "dump" the Plant Breeders Rights Legislation. You said that you would phone if you got it figured out. Now that you are retired you will have more time. It seems to me



with your experience as 13 years as minister of agriculture and several years in the Senate, you should know the political route.

In addition to the seed royalty of \$15 per acre farmers have added costs of annual seed, \$10 to \$12 per acre for fertilizer, much higher fuel costs because they have to seed every year and exorbitant pesticide costs. Initial Wheat Board price for #1 WHRS wheat at the Saskatchewan Pool elevator in Davidson is \$2.05 per bushel on Oct. 13. It is a very low price but farmers would be far better off today if you had permitted the development of perennial cereal grains that fix their own nitrogen. It is obvious the transnational lobby was much more powerful than you and the following ministers of agriculture were.

In fact your action kept Agriculture Canada plant breeders from making a major contribution to feeding the world's hungry people. Now we have the transnationals exploiting the world's hungry who are growing rapidly in numbers. Well, Mr. Whelan and Mr. Vanclief, now that the prime minister has appointed a left wing governor general perhaps you might work out a proposal that is acceptable to Canadians to restore the former system of plant breeding to help feed the world's six billion people.

Elmer Laird, president, Back to the Farm Research Foundation

December 2000 *alive* #218

### Take Back Control

We need political control of our plant breeding, agriculture research and extension services. We lost it in 1991. The Plant Breeders Rights legislation was promoted by the Trudeau Liberal government and passed into legislation by Brian Mulroney's Conservative government in 1991.

The legislation gives transnational drug and chemical corporations complete control of the seeds in our "global village." Furthermore, it gives the transnationals the right to do research, patent and control the seed. This is a violation of our basic human rights. It's obvious now that in the long run it will be disastrous for agriculture all over the world. The August 1 edition of *The Times* (London, England) carried the following article entitled: *Welcome to the Red, Red Grass of Home*.

The article by Jonathan Leake says:

"The green grass of home could soon be red, brown or purple. The traditional sward is in danger of being put out to grass by a new range of designer lawns that do not need watering or mowing."

Scientists even plan to develop luminous lawns that will light up at night. The grass—containing a gene possibly extracted from luminous marine animals—emits a gentle glow, becoming brighter when stepped on. It could provide the perfect setting for late barbeques.

Not everything in the garden is rosy, however. This new breed of genetically engineered (GE) lawns has been nicknamed "Frankengrass" by environmentalists who believe it poses a bigger danger to society than merely creating a new generation of indolent gardeners. They warn that grass can crossbreed with a wide range of other species allowing alien genes to escape into the environment. Forty test sites in America have been vandalized by an anarchist organization. The new grasses will be able to kill pests by secreting a designer toxin within their blades that uses a gene taken from a poisonous fungus.

Scotts, the garden products company behind some of the research, believes its work will revolutionize gardens, golf courses and sports pitches within the next five years. It's already testing the grasses on plots in America after buying the gardening arm of Monsanto, the GE crop producer, and gaining access to its gene library.

Charles Berger, Scotts' chief executive, said his dream was of a new generation of lawns. "In the next five years lawns will need less fertilizer, water and mowing—and pests won't come near."

The article shows how ridiculous transnational plant breeding programs have become.

They have nothing to do with improving the quality and productivity of food being produced. These programs are strictly for economic exploitation of farmers and the land and the control of agricultural production.

Prior to the *Plant Breeders Rights* legislation that was passed in 1991, we had an excellent system. Canada Agriculture Research stations and universities across the nation did all the plant breeding. They worked in the best interest of consumers and farmers and were interested in soil conservation. The agriculture research was financed by taxpayers' dollars and Canadians had political control of the research. All seed developed became public property.

Today neither farmers nor consumers have control, but indirectly they pay the cost of the transnationals' ridiculous research and will be doomed to poor quality, high cost, polluted food and soil degradation as it continues.

Professional agronomists lost a lot of their intellectual integrity and freedom as a result of the *Plant Breeders Rights* Bill. Prior to 1991, when they were employed by governments and universities, they were free to make decisions on the basis of what they thought was right or wrong. After the *Plant Breeders Rights* legislation their decision-making was dominated by the transnational drug and chemical companies. Farmers and citizens also lost political control of agricultural research and extension services at the same time.

Personally, I will vote for the party that convinces me it will rescind the *Plant Breeders Rights* legislation following the next election. I know many others who will do the same thing.

January 8, 2001 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:

Craig Oliver, journalist, CTV; Jason Moscovitz, journalist, CBC TV and Barry Wilson, Ottawa Bureau, *Western Producer*:

I am writing to you because democracy is not working here at Davidson and I have some timely questions to ask federal political leaders and agriculture critics whom you see daily. I live at the northwest end of the federal constituency of Regina-Lumsden-Lake Centre. We didn't see a federal candidate in Davidson in the 1997 federal election. We only saw one briefly in the 2000 election on an individual basis and not at a public meeting. Regina is divided into four constituencies that fan out in four directions from the city.

This means about 50,000 urbanites in each constituency with a few thousand rural people. Obviously the candidates spend most of their time in the city during the campaign where there are a larger concentration of people. When the national leaders stopped in Regina they hurried away like scared tomcats. On one occasion Stockwell Day, Alliance leader, never left Regina airport.

The prime minister met a few farmers at the Bessborough Hotel in Saskatoon. Media reported (our physically tough prime minister) had over 30 RCMP guards for security. NDP leader Alexa McDonough did attend the NDP provincial convention. However, the provincial NDP has abandoned their support of the family farm and it is very doubtful if many farmers attended because they have abandoned their support of the NDP.

The reason I believe the national party leaders were in such a hurry is that they were afraid someone was going to ask them the following question: "Have you abandoned your support for the family farm and are you just marking time until the transnational corporations take over agriculture completely."

The transnational corporations are controlling agriculture now and if Agriculture Minister Lyle Vanclief was honest he would admit it.

The government of former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney passed the *Plant Breeders Rights Act* in 1991. This gave transnational corporations the right to patent and control the seeds of this world. Farmers can no longer save their own seed. This is a violation of everyone's rights. The rest of the world realizes it but we don't seem to in North America. It is rather ironic that while Liberal Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau was promoting the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, his agriculture Minister Eugene Whelan was promoting Plant Breeders Rights legislation. (Retired senator Whelan today is very unhappy with his participation in the program.)

As a result of the *Plant Breeders Rights Act* Canadians have lost political control of agriculture, federal and provincial agronomists have lost their intellectual and moral freedom, and farmers have lost control of their farms in many instances the farm itself. The National Farmers Union (NFU) is the only direct dues paying voluntary farm policy organization in Canada that has a national charter and a constitution. The NFU at their last annual convention in early December 2000 passed the following resolution:

*Rescind Plant Breeders Rights Act*

*Whereas as a result of the Plant Breeders Rights Act legislated by the government, Canadians are increasingly losing control of agricultural research, extension and other crop breeding programs, and*

*Whereas through propriety rights of the large corporations that are dominating the seed industry, Canadian farmers have lost the basic human right to save and use their own seed from year to year, and*

*Whereas public funds are being used to promote chemical agriculture which is causing many environmental land health problems, and*

*Whereas the federal agronomists have to compromise their intellectual and moral freedom on a day- to-day basis, as a result of the infiltration of transnational corporations (TNCs) in Agriculture Canada, and*

*Whereas private investment in plant breeding is capturing the benefit of the public investment and placing sector researchers in a conflict of interest position between the public interest and the need to secure adequate funding for their work,*

*Therefore be it resolved that the NFU demand that the federal government rescind the Plant Breeders Rights Act and commit sufficient funding to ensure that Canada is a leader in plant breeding and the interests of producers and consumers, and the environment are protected.*

I sincerely hope you will ask national party leaders and agriculture critics if they will rescind the Plant Breeders Rights Act immediately I can assure you that all Canadian citizens will be much better off with the family farm than corporate agriculture.

Elmer Laird, president,  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

February 5, 2001 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:

Federal Agriculture Minister Lyle Vanclief, Canadian Wheat Board Minister Ralph Goodale and Saskatchewan Agriculture Minister Clay Serby

Re: Rescinding the *Plant Breeders Rights Act* and Declaring a moratorium on genetically engineered or altered seed.

The National Farmers Union (NFU) and the Saskatchewan Rally Group have both passed resolutions demanding that the Plant Breeders Rights Act be rescinded. The Act was promoted by the Trudeau Liberal government and passed by the Mulroney Conservative government in 1991.

The Plant Breeders Rights legislation gives transnational corporations the right to breed and patent their seeds. This was in violation of all our basic rights. As a result all Canadians lost political control of agriculture (you make it abundantly clear that you are no longer in control of agriculture policy by the decisions and statements all three of you make).

In addition agronomists lost their intellectual and moral freedom and farmers lost their fundamental right to save their own seed for replanting.

The NFU have also passed a resolution demanding a moratorium on the production of GMO seed. The Canadian Wheat Board are opposed to the introduction of GMO wheat. The states of North Dakota and Montana are introducing legislation to ban the introduction of GMO wheat. If you were in control of agriculture policy in Canada you could do and would do the same thing.

The genetic engineering of seeds areas potentially dangerous to mankind as the splitting of the atom. In the December 2000 edition of Acres USA in an article entitled Health Nutrition and Biotechnology by Arden B. Anderson D.O. PhD, under the subheading: Trouble on the doorstep, the article said:

*Back in the United States, an inquiry by the FDA and the USDA were under way to harness the possibilities presented by genetic manipulation. Several labs were commissioned by the U.S. government to do a study using genetically modified bacteria to facilitate the breakdown of organic waste matter, such as from a farm or industry byproduct, into alcohol and the remaining hash would be used as an organic fertilizer. One such study was conducted by Dr. Elaine Ingham at Oregon State University on the soil bacterium, Kiebsiella planticola. The idea to modify the bacteria, which occur naturally in all living soils, so that they could convert organic material into usable matter, in theory, sounded great. However what Dr. Ingham discovered was that when this bacterium was added to soil in greenhouse planters shortly before its release into the environment, it rapidly did its job converting all organic material to alcohol. This, of course, included plant roots, killing the plants in 14 days. These bacteria, if it had been released into the environment, could very well have wiped out all terrestrial plants, including crops and forests, converting them all to alcohol.*

There may be other potential GMO hazards that we haven't heard of waiting in the wings.

*The Ram's Horn* is published by well-known environmentalists Brewster and Cathleen Keen at Sorrento, B.C. The January 2001 edition carried the following announcement under the heading New organic standard. It said:

*The U.S. Department of Agriculture finally adopted the first standards for the labelling and processing of organic foods just before Christmas. The new standards, which were ordered by congress and then took the department more than a decade to produce, ban the use of irradiation, biotechnology and sewer-sludge fertilizer, as well as synthetic pesticides and fertilizers, and antibiotics in meat labelled organic. The new rules start to take effect on Feb. 19.*

Organic certification standards in Canada although still voluntary ban the growing of GMO seeds of any kind.

A joint resolution of the Senate and House of Representatives that is being introduced into Montana Legislature expresses concern about the loss of international markets due to GMOs. In addition to environmental hazards I think it is time both federal and provincial governments in Canada seriously look at what GMOs are doing to our prices in the international marketplace and quit blaming European subsidies as the villain. I trust you will give banning GMO seed in Canada your immediate attention.

Elmer Laird, president,  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

March 19, 2001 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:  
The Hon. Stéphane Dion, Minister of Intergovernmental  
Affairs Government of Canada

Re: Separatism, rural not Western

Your recent trip to Saskatchewan to address western separatism was ill timed and ill advised. You and your cabinet colleagues do not seem to understand that as a result of your government policies you are forcing farmers to leave the land and as a result many more off farm jobs will be lost as the family farm disappears and the transnational corporations take over agriculture. The farm demonstrations across Canada March 14 should make you aware this is not western separatism but farm separatism.

You didn't need to come to Saskatchewan to look for the roots of farm separatism, they are in the caucus office of the Liberal Party and the offices of the transnational drug and chemical companies who lobby our federal Cabinet ministers and tell Agriculture Minister Lyle Vanclief what to do.

The Liberal government of Pierre Elliot Trudeau and particularly his minister of agriculture Eugene Whelan promoted the *Plant Breeders Rights Act* and the Brian Mulroney Conservative government passed the *Plant Breeders Rights Act* in 1991 which gives transnational corporations through genetic engineering or other procedures the right to develop and patent seed. This was a violation of the rights of all Canadians. Plant breeders' rights had nothing to do with improvements of agricultural technology. It was strictly for the purpose of giving transnational corporations control of the family farm. It created several major problems:

1. Canadians lost political control of agriculture;
2. Agronomists lost their right to free speech (corporations are telling them what to say in the field of agriculture research and technology), and
3. Farmers lost their right to save their own seed which gives corporations the opportunity to take control of their farms.

The fact is Mr. Dion, your colleague the Minister of Agriculture Lyle Vanclief is not controlling agriculture, the transnational drug and chemical company lobbyist are. He should admit it.

On March 6 Mr. Kai Kruger, television producer for a German network came to Bruno, Sask. to interview internationally known farmer Percy Schmeiser. Mr. Schmeiser received the Mahatma Gandhi award in India Oct. 2, 2000 (Gandhi's birthday) for non-violent action to protect farmers' rights to save their own seed. Schmeiser had fought against the transnational company Monsanto in a Saskatoon court of law in June 2000. Today there has been no decision on the court case, however, he is presently travelling all over the world supporting farmers' rights to save their own seed. On March 7 I was invited to the National Farmers Union office in Saskatoon by Mr. Kruger, he wanted to interview farmers who were opposed to GMO seeds.

I am a Royal Canadian Air Force veteran of World War 2. On the 70- mile trip to Saskatoon I thought about my war-time experience in Germany. I went into Germany on May 1, 1945 with about 500 other members of the RGAF I stayed there for two and one-



half months. The war was over May 5, 1945. While in Germany I saw the devastation that war caused, I travelled through the countryside and the major cities of Hanover, Hamburg and Cleve. I witnessed the ravages of war on buildings, farms, railroads and real estate. There were no services then, not even a post office operating. When I travelled to Saskatoon I thought about the ravages of corporate action following the passing of *Plant Breeders Rights Acts* in Canada and the loss of our “crow” rate. We have rail lines being torn up, highways being busted up because of the heavy loads being transferred from rail to road and the tearing down and the burning up of our grain elevator system. Huge provincial government subsidized hog barns are polluting our water and air all over Saskatchewan and dividing our communities. I passed the town of Hanley en route to Saskatoon. In Hanley there is a 205,000 bushel grain elevator the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool will close and farmers who paid for it in the first place are attempting to buy it back. They have already paid for it over the years as members of the co-op Sask Pool formerly was. Our soil, food and water is polluted with toxic agricultural chemicals. Our health-care system is in crisis, line ups at food banks are getting longer, the child poverty rate is rapidly increasing. I asked myself, “how could this be happening here, there isn’t even a war on?”

Well Mr. Dion, there is a war on. The war is between the transnational corporations that want to control the world and Canadian citizens who want to live and enjoy freedom in a democratic society. Well to date the government we have elected is supporting the corporate side of the war. That is why we have rural separatism. When is your government going to support the citizens who elected it and provide a democratic society or did my comrades fight World War 2 in vain. They thought they were fighting for freedom.

Elmer Laird, president  
Back to the Farm Research Foundation

September 17, 2001 Davidson Leader

### **Research Foundation makes presentation to Task Force**

On March 29, 2001 Prime Minister Jean Chretien appointed a Caucus Task Force on Future Opportunities in Farming. He appointed 10 Liberal MPs and three Liberal Senators. Most task forces we hear about that come from Ottawa are from all parties who are represented in the House of Commons. The task force visited the prairie provinces last week. Sept. 11 they visited our Research and Demonstration farm and heard four presentations: Arnold Taylor, Kenaston - president of the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate; Debbie Miller, Lisieux - president of the board of directors of Organic Crop Improvement Association International of Nebraska; Merv Ermil, Bethune - president of Canadian Organic Certification Co-operative (COCC) and the Back to the Farm Research Foundation. Others in attendance were Mike Kasper, director of C.O.C.C. and wife Vi of Colonsay, Wayne Morrison and Lorne Dean of Davidson and Marika English of Hanley, who are all directors of the Back to the Farm Research Foundation.

Task Force members in attendance were chairman Bob Speller, MP (Haldimand Norfolk-Brant); vice-chair Diane St. Jacques, MP (Shefford); John Harvard, MP (Charleswood-St. James Assiniboia); Rick Laliberte, MP (Churchill River); Susan Whelan, M.P. (Essex); Paul MackIm, MP (Northumberland); Murray Calder MP (Dufferin-Peel-WellingtonGrey); Wayne Easter, MP (Malpeque); Senator Jack Wiebe (Saskatchewan). Wiebe was Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan before Linda Haverstock.

The Task Force spent about an hour hearing presentations and asking questions before proceeding to Regina.

Following is our presentation:

Question 1: Does the Liberal government support the family farm as a basic unit of agricultural production or will you continue to support the trend to corporate farming? We support the family farm!

If you support the family farm then your government should immediately rescind The *Plant Breeders Rights* legislation so farmers can regain control of the family farm and their seed. The legislation was promoted by the Trudeau government and passed by the Mulroney government in 1991. As a result Canadians lost political control of agriculture and farmers lost an excellent breeding system that was carried out by Canada research and university researches.

#### **Why rescind?**

You may not be aware of it, but either World War II has flared up again or World War III has started. The war is between certified organic producers who are all family farmers and the transnational corporations who are rapidly taking control of the family farm.

Let's be perfectly frank and honest. GMO plant breeding has nothing to do with feeding the hungry world or the improvement of agriculture. Monsanto developed GMO canola so they could use a stronger herbicide. The previous canola herbicide was not working so they needed a stronger one. It is promoted strictly to give transnational corporations control of family farms. If certified organic farmers win the war, we will have a clean environment, unpolluted water (without pesticides) and nutritious,

unpolluted food. If the transnational corporations win, the use of pesticides will increase and so will the pollution of water, food and air. To date it is obvious all governments are on the side of corporations.

The main weapon of war at this time is Roundup Ready GMO canola, and more recently GMO wheat. Monsanto has employed Robinson Security of Saskatoon to enforce their contracts with farmers in Canada and Pinkertons to do the same in the United States. Security firm staff are entering farmers' fields without permission to check crops for GMO canola. They are flying over farmers' fields dropping herbicide bombs to test for GMO canola.

However, they have no control of their product. Bees, the wind and recently in Manitoba a tornado carried the GMO pollen for miles polluting farmers' fields. This whole procedure is a violation of farmers' rights. Some farmers are so mad they are ready to start shooting at the planes. Monsanto is using Robinson Security to intimidate farmers. One young certified organic farmer told me recently that he would never grow canola again because he didn't want to get involved in the war.

#### **Pesticides were developed to kill**

Pesticides were developed for biological warfare in World Wars I and II. They were designed to kill and the federal testing of pesticides has never had any creditability. NDP MP Lorne Nystrom reported to the House of Commons in 1978 about the Industrial Biotest in the United

States where all of the records were shredded in a plant that provided research on toxicity for pesticide manufacturers when U.S. environmental protection staff came to inspect. It's ironic that when prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau was promoting the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, his agriculture Minister Eugene Whelan was promoting *Plant Breeders Rights* that took away a farmers' basic right to save and control his/her own seed and his/her own farm.

Certified organic farmers may take class action against the transnationals.

There are about 1,000 certified organic farmers in the province farming about one million acres of land. Fortunately, at the last session of the Saskatchewan legislature, legislation was passed that will provide organic producers or anyone else with the opportunity to take class action against transnational corporations for control of their family farms and seed on January 2, 2002. Certified organic farmers will have little choice. It is to be hoped that politicians and consumers understand and support the issues.

#### **Votes and economics**

There are some positive things on the certified organic farmer's side. The Supreme

Court of Canada gave communities the right to ban pesticides in their communities. The City of Halifax has passed a bylaw phasing out pesticides and the City of Toronto has one under consideration. As these large population centres decide to ban pesticides, the next thing is they will demand certified organic food and support the party that leads the way to a clean environment and an abundance of certified organic food.

#### **Our allies in the GMO War**

A. The National Farmers Union, the Council of Canadians, the Canadian Wheat Board, SOD, the Keystone Agricultural Producers, major environmental organizations, and 240 smaller organizations all signed a letter to the Prime Minister requesting a ban on GMO wheat in late July 2001.

B. Seventy-year-old Bruno Sask. farmer Percy Schmeiser received the Mahatma Gandhi Award on Oct. 2, 2000 for taking non-violent action in a courthouse in Saskatoon to protect farmers' rights to save their own seed. Since then he has travelled all over the world speaking on that topic and is presently on a 31 day speaking tour in Africa, starting in South Africa.

Continued next week.

December 2001 *alive* #230

### Low Federal Support for Organic Farming

On March 29, 2001, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien appointed a caucus Liberal Task Force on Future Opportunities in Farming. The 13-member task force has 10 MPs and three senators and is chaired by MP Bob Speller (Halimand-Norfolk-Brandt). Six of the members are farmers, but not one is certified organic.

During the week of September 3 to 7 they had an unpublicized fact-finding tour of Eastern Canada and another one of the prairie provinces the week of September 10 to 14. Finally, on short notice, we persuaded them to visit our organic research and demonstration farm in Davidson, Sask. They came to my home on September 11 and gave us half an hour for four presentations by myself; Arnold Taylor, president of the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate; Debbie Miller, president of the Organic Crop Improvement Association of Nebraska; and Merv Ermel, president of both the Canadian Organic Certification Co-operative and our Back To The Farm Research Foundation.

Space does not permit reporting on all presentations; however, the following question and statement had the support of all groups: "Does the Liberal government support the family farm as a basic unit of agricultural production, or will they continue to support the trend to corporate farming? We support the family farm!"

### **Plant Breeders' Rights**

If the government supported the family farm, it would immediately rescind the Plant Breeders' Rights legislation so farmers could regain control of both the family farm and their seed. The legislation was promoted by the Trudeau government and passed by the Mulroney government in 1991. As a result Canadians lost political control of agriculture and farmers lost an excellent plant-breeding system that was previously carried out by government and university researchers.

Why rescind the legislation? There is a war going on between certified organic producers, who are all family farmers, and the transnational corporations who are rapidly taking control of the family farm. Let's be honest. Genetically modified GM plant breeding has nothing to do with feeding world hunger or the improvement of agriculture: Monsanto developed GM canola so it could promote the sale of a stronger herbicide. The previous canola herbicide was not working so the company needed a stronger one.

If certified organic farmers win this war, we will have a cleaner environment, unpolluted water (without pesticides) and nutritious, unpolluted food. If the transnational corporations win, the use of pesticides will increase and so will the pollution of water, food and air. To date it is obvious that most governments are on the side of corporations.

**Roundup Really Wrong**

The main weapon of war at this time is Roundup Ready GM canola and, more recently, GM wheat. Monsanto has employed Robinson Security of Saskatoon to enforce its contracts and collect a \$15 per acre royalty from farmers in Canada. Pinkertons is doing the same in the United States. Security staff are entering farmers' fields without permission to check crops and are flying over farmers' fields dropping herbicide bombs to test for GM canola.

Ironically, Monsanto has no control over its own product. Bees, wind and, recently in Manitoba, a tornado, carried the GM pollen for miles, polluting farmers' fields. This whole procedure is a violation of farmers' rights. One young certified organic farmer told me recently that he would never grow canola again because he didn't want to get involved in the war. Let's be perfectly frank again: Don Robertson, vice president of our research foundation, and I are both World War II veterans, and this is not the kind of freedom we fought for.

**Possible Class Action**

There are about 1,000 certified organic farmers in Saskatchewan who are farming about one million acres of land. Fortunately, at the last session of the Saskatchewan legislature, legislation was passed that will provide the opportunity to take class action against transnational corporations starting Jan. 2, 2002. Certified organic farmers will have little choice but to take legal action to push for control of their family farm and seed. It is to be hoped that politicians and consumers will understand and support these issues.

There are some positive things on our side. The Supreme Court of Canada upheld the right of communities to ban pesticides within their jurisdictions. Halifax has passed a bylaw phasing out pesticides and Toronto has one under consideration. As these large population centres decide to ban pesticides, hopefully the next thing they'll demand is support for a political party that leads the way to a clean environment and an abundance of certified organic food.

## THE PERCY SCHMEISER VS MONSANTO CASE

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October 23, 2000

Open letter to: Prime Minister Jean Chretien; Conservative leader Joe Clark; federal opposition leader, Stockwell Day, Canadian Alliance; Bloc Quebecois leader, Gilles Duceppe and NDP leader, Alexa McDonough

Re: Rescinding *The Plant Breeders Rights Act*

Sixty-nine-year-old Percy Schmeiser farms at Bruno, Sask. and has for most of his life with his wife Louise of 48 years. He farms nine quarter sections of land (1,440 acres) where he grew 1,100 acres of wheat, canola, peas and oats in the 2000 growing season. On Oct. 2, 2000, he received the Mahatma Gandhi Award for non-violence at the Research Foundation of Science, Technology and Ecology at New Delhi, India. The award was presented because of Schmeiser's fight for farmers all over the world to save and use their own seed. His fight was in a Canadian Court in Saskatoon. The award was presented by Gandhi and Dasham Samite of the Gandhi family. (Mahatma Gandhi was a internationally known pacifist who through non-violent means over many years lead India to freedom from British rule in 1947) The award stands for "The Betterment of Mankind in a non-violent way". Parliamentarians, Supreme Court judges, academics and farmers were present for the presentation to Schmeiser. The award was presented on Mahatma Gandhi's birthday. It was also the Schmeiser's 48th wedding anniversary

Schmeiser has been growing canola on his farm for 50 years. He saved his own seed from one year to the next. In the summer of 1998 the transnational drug and chemical company Monsanto inspected his farm without his permission and claimed he was growing Roundup Ready canola which is genetically engineered canola and they have the patent rights on it. On Aug. 6, 1998 Monsanto charged him with "patent infringement". They claimed the genetically engineered canola they found on his farm was an infringement of their "intellectual property rights".

The case was heard in federal court in Saskatoon. It lasted for two and a half weeks. The judge expected to make a decision by the end of August. It is now the middle of October and no decision yet. Schmeiser said that they probably could have settled immediately with Monsanto for four-to-five thousand dollars. Today his legal bill is \$160,000. He has also accumulated another \$40,000 in expenses related to the case. Monsanto's legal bill is \$400,000 and depending on the decision of the judge the cost to Schmeiser could be as much as \$600,000.

The *Plant Breeders Rights Act* passed by the government of then Prime Minister Brian Mulroney in 1991 gave corporations the right to patent seeds. Monsanto developed genetically engineered canola and patented it. If a farmer wants to use the Monsanto seed he must sign an agreement to: use Monsanto's genetically engineered canola, use their

Roundup Ready herbicide, sell all the seed they grow (this means they must not keep any for seed next year) and pay Monsanto a \$15 an acre royalty for the privilege of using Monsanto's seed. Monsanto claims Schmeiser used the seed illegally, Schmeiser claims that it must have blown off a passing truck or the pollen must have drifted over from an adjoining field. The judge will decide eventually. Since Schmeiser has been charged, he has become an international figure in the debate about who controls the world's seeds. Prior to the court case, French, Dutch, British and Danish National T.V. crews have come to Bruno, Sask. and produced hour long documentaries on the Schmeiser case. Last Friday, Oct. 20, the Schmeisers were leaving for Europe. Schmeiser will be speaking at meetings in Germany, Holland and England on the topic of who should control the world's seeds. Following the European meetings he is going to South Africa, the Philippines, Bangladesh and California. He said the general topic of discussion in all these meetings is "the Globalization and the failure of the Green Revolution". The Green Revolution was started in the mid 1960s. American Norman Borlaug was head of it. The theory was to use maximum amounts of fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides to grow more food for a hungry world.

Most of the countries in the world (who are our trading partners) have recognized the Green Revolution failed. Here in Canada we still have policies to promote chemical agriculture and genetic engineering only (e.g., Saskatchewan spends 0.48 per cent of its annual agriculture budget on certified organic agriculture).

Premier Roy Romanow and Federal Natural Resources Minister Ralph Goodale have been pouring millions of dollars into the biotechnology industry in Saskatoon, trying to make it the biotechnology capital of the world. It is obvious now that won't happen.

Schmeiser spent two weeks in India visiting agriculture research stations and agriculture facilities. He said that India has a rural or farm population of 750,000,000 people. The average farm size is one acre. He said, "It is obvious the farmers of India don't have any room in their family budgets to pay royalties to Monsanto or any other transnational corporation. They showed him a wide variety of seeds. India has been farming for over 2000 years and have bred and developed a wide variety of seeds for the many different growing conditions. There was a close working relationship between farmers and academics".

On one occasion he had the opportunity to address a meeting of 300,000 farmers (we only have 230,000 to 250,000 in Canada). He has visited seed fairs in Canada but he said they were very small compared to the number of Indian varieties. He said there was a very strong support for farmer's rights to save their own seed.

The question is: How are we going to continue to trade with nations of the world if we don't all march to the same drummer? I sincerely hope all political parties will support rescinding the *Plant Breeders Rights Act* so the farmers of the world can use and control their own seed. In my opinion no one has the right to control the seeds of the world.

Elmer Laird, president,  
Back To The Farm  
Research Foundation



October 30, 2000 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:

Bob Friesen, national president Canadian Federation of Agriculture; Thilit England, P.Ag., president Canadian Institute of Agrologists; and Cory Ollikka, president, National Farmers Union

RE: United effort to rescind the *Plant Breeders Rights Act*

I am writing to ask all three organizations to consider united or joint action to get parliament to rescind the *Plant Breeders Rights Act*. The act gives transnational drug and chemical corporations the right to develop and patent seed. It is a violation of our basic human rights as citizens and consumers and is of special concern for agronomists and farmers. Agronomists have lost their academic freedom because transnational corporations are telling them what they can do by way of agricultural research.

They no longer have the freedom to speak about the research and extension services that they think should be done. The family farm is fast disappearing as a result of the influence and controls the corporations have on public and agricultural policy. The corporations are charging royalties for the use of seeds they have patented and are refusing the farmers their right to save the seed to plant the following year. The citizens of Canada have lost their political control over agricultural research and extension services they enjoyed prior to the Mulroney government passing the *Plant Breeders Rights Act* in 1991.

I am attaching copies of two "open letters" (published in The Davidson Leader) asking the leaders of the five national political parties in the House of Commons to rescind the *Plant Breeders Rights Act* so we can regain our political control of agriculture.

The letter of Oct. 23 reports on a Bruno, Sask. area farmer Percy Schmeiser, who won the Mahatma Gandhi award for non-violent action to protect farmers rights to save their seed. The award stands for "The betterment of mankind in a non-violent way". The award was presented Oct. 2, the anniversary of Gandhi's birthday in New Delhi, India.

Schmeiser has been growing canola on his farm for 50 years. He saved his own seed from one year to the next. In the summer of 1998 the transnational drug and chemical company Monsanto inspected his farm without his permission and claimed he was growing Roundup Ready canola which is genetically engineered canola, and they have the patent rights on it.

On Aug. 6, 1998, Monsanto charged him with "patent infringement". They claimed the generically engineered canola they found on his farm was an infringement of the "intellectual property rights". The case was heard in federal court in Saskatoon. It lasted for two and one half weeks. The judge was expected to make a decision by the end of August. There is no decision yet.

Schmeiser said that they probably could have settled immediately with Monsanto for \$4,000 to \$5,000. Today his legal bill is \$160,000. He has also accumulated another \$40,000 in expenses related to the case. Monsanto's legal bill is \$400,000 and depending on the decision of the judge, the cost to Schmeiser could be as much as \$600,000.

Schmeiser's non-violent action was taken in a federal court in Saskatoon in a two and one half week court case in June of 2000.

The award and Schmeiser's experience in India highlights the following:

1. Gandhi's non-violent successful political action to free India from British Colonial rule is a symbol to everyone who wants to preserve and enjoy democracy and democratic freedom.

2. There are concerns all over the world about farmers rights to save their own seed and control their own farms.

3. Farmers, researchers and agrologists in India were working together for the betterment of agriculture and the right of farmers to save their own seed.

4. The rest of the world has recognized the "Green Revolution" (heavy use of commercial fertilizer, pesticides, herbicides and irrigation is a failure).

Here in Canada certified organic farmers and farmers in transition have recognized the Green Revolution is a failure.

In the main, our water, food, soil and air is becoming increasingly more polluted with toxic agricultural chemicals. However, federal and all provincial governments continue to promote chemical agriculture programs and genetic engineering of seeds. Our national Medicare program is in a crisis and may fail if we don't clean up our environment.

However, governments and particularly ministers of health refuse to recognize that the foundation of good health is a healthy nutritious unpolluted supply of food and water. As time goes on mothers and grandmothers are becoming increasingly more concerned about the environment their children and grandchildren will grow in.

Since 1991 Canadian farmers have experienced many adverse changes to the well being of their farms. In western Canada we have seen the loss of the crow rate; destruction of our elevator system, railways and highways; higher transportation costs; corporate hog barns; no effective health or environmental regulations, etc. There is great discontent among the farm community with Agriculture Minister Lyle Vanclief.

However, the real question is: Is the minister calling the shots or are the transnational drug and chemical companies controlling the minister and to what degree.

It would take an army of researchers to find out, so I can only speculate. However it is obvious that we have lost democratic control and we need leadership to restore it.

Armistice Day is Nov. 11, on that day we will be holding services all across Canada to remember the 111,500 veterans who gave their lives in two world wars and to protect democracy. I am a 76-year-old veteran of the Royal Canadian Air Force. There is only one Second World War veteran younger than I am in the Davidson district.

Now that our political freedom is being challenged by the transnational drug and chemical companies, let us remember our fallen comrades by taking political action to restore and protect our democratic rights in a non-violent way like Ghandi did.

Authoritarian control in the past has led to revolutions or wars. It is not the desirable route. Gentlemen, we look to you to provide the leadership to restore our democratic rights in a non-violent way.

Elmer Laird, president,  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

*alive #Dr Jozef Krop Supporters*

### **Saskatchewan Farmer Fights for Future of Food**

On March 29, 2001, the transnational drug and chemical company Monsanto won its case against 70-year-old Saskatchewan farmer Percy Schmeiser.

In a 62-page decision, the newly retired federal court Judge Andrew McKay ruled that Schmeiser violated Monsanto's biotechnology patent when its genetically engineered Roundup Ready canola was found on his 1,400-acre grain and oilseed farm. The decision took away Schmeiser's and all Canadian farmers' fundamental right to save their own seed.

Prior to the Plant Breeders' Rights Act passed by the Mulroney government in 1991, Canadians had political control of agriculture. Most seed for agricultural crops was developed by plant breeders working for Agriculture Canada or universities. The seed was then distributed to registered growers. Farmers could buy the seed to multiply and resell, maintaining the right to keep it for his lifetime or sell it. It was his.

Schmeiser had been saving his own canola seed for 50 years. Every year he and his wife walked through their fields and selected the best seeds for the following year. He was proud of his own variety. When Roundup Ready canola pollen drifted into his field, it contaminated his seed. In one season he lost all the results of his many years of selecting and saving.

Schmeiser doesn't know how Monsanto's seed got into his field. Honeybees and even the wind can carry pollen for miles. Evidence was produced in court that his neighbour had grown Roundup Ready canola in 1996, unknown to Schmeiser.

A farmer growing Roundup Ready canola must buy both the seed and herbicide from Monsanto and pay a royalty of \$15 per acre. (Several other seed companies enforce similar contracts). On my farm, it would amount to three to four times my annual municipal taxes.

Transnationals and Health Canada scientists claim they have tested GMO food products for safety. The only place they can be tested is in people who eat them. However, without labelling, people can't pinpoint what has made them sick. Even with labelling it will take at least a generation to test their safety.

It's obvious that international consumers don't want GMO grain and oilseeds. Their development has nothing to do with the betterment of agriculture and feeding a hungry world. Its purpose is to give transnational companies control of the family farm and to pollute organic farmers' fields and make their products unsaleable as certified organic. Organic growers don't need their toxic pesticides and herbicides. Without them, food and water would no longer be polluted and sales of drugs would drop. Transnationals would lose royalties as well as pesticide and drug sales.

Monsanto wants to establish a GMO wheat test plot in Wales, reports Schmeiser, who visited the area in April of this year. London merchants have told the farmers that if they let Monsanto establish the test plot, they won't buy their organic products any more.

Prince Charles, himself an organic farmer opposed to GMOs, asked to meet Schmeiser when he visited Saskatchewan this spring. His request was denied by provincial protocol officials. Federal and provincial tax dollars have been pouring into Saskatoon in an effort to make it the GMO capital of the world.

Percy Schmeiser is appealing the Monsanto decision. Having already spent his retirement savings on this case, he's going to need financial support. His trust fund is:

Fight Genetically Altered Foods Inc.  
CIBC Account # 38-01411  
603 Main Street  
Humboldt, Saskatchewan S0K 2A0

### **GE Wheat Test Plots Secret**

Although the Canadian Wheat Board, which has a monopoly on all wheat grown on the prairies, has demanded a moratorium on genetically engineered wheat, the federal Health Protection Branch has approved a permit for Monsanto to test plant one variety there. This is now under way in Alberta, despite the added objections of farmers and consumers.

Wheat is Canada's major food export product, with over 75 per cent of production exported. It will be impossible to segregate GMO from non-GMO wheat in the future. All Canada's western farmers, organic and conventional, will lose their export markets. They have already lost their canola market.

Alberta's 250 organic growers, with 44,000 acres of organic wheat, risk the terminal contamination of their crops as genetically modified pollen drifts from the test plots. Saskatchewan has over 1,000 organic growers farming a million acres. Manitoba's 250 organic farmers till about 200,000 acres.

The location of the 20 Alberta test plots is secret. In Europe, similar plots were destroyed by angry citizens. For more information, contact Sharon Rempel, [oldwheat@home.com](mailto:oldwheat@home.com).

### **Chemicals Formed in Irradiated Food**

Exposing food to ionizing radiation can lead to the formation of bizarre new chemicals called "unique radiolytic products" that can cause serious health problems. A recent German study confirms one chemical formed in irradiated food can damage DNA: the newly discovered chemical, 2-DCB, caused significant DNA damage in the colons of rats that ate the substance.

Food irradiation is designed to sterilize food using radioactive isotopes or a linear accelerator to create the radiation equivalent of 10 to 70 million chest X-rays. (Fresh

strawberries take five to eight minutes to irradiate, frozen chicken 20.) Two isotopes used--cobalt-60 and caesium-137--are among the most deadly substances known and are waste disposal problems for the nuclear industry.

A complex series of reactions breaks down food molecules into new and potentially dangerous ones, destroying enzymes and vitamins A, C, D, E and K and some B-complex. Fruit juices suffer some of the worst damage.

The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization and the World Health Organization argue the process is needed to deal with world hunger and reduce food-borne diseases. Their joint body, the Codex Alimentarius Commission, opposes national and local restrictions and irradiation labelling (a "radura" symbol). Codex reversed earlier dose limits of 10 kilograys and now says "one can go as high as 75 kGy, as has already been done in some countries . . ." Canada supports irradiation.

Numerous accidents have occurred at irradiation facilities, with workers injured and radioactive contamination of them, food and the environment. Because the radura symbol is not a mandatory label requirement, buy local and organic food to avoid radiolytic byproducts and protect workers.

### **Combat Climate Change**

A non-profit group is tracking the efforts of Canadians to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. Everyday personal emissions account for 20 per cent of the total. You can find out ways to combat climate change, develop a personal action plan and record your activities at the Climate Change Voluntary Challenge and Registry Web site, . Here are a few tips:

Transportation causes 53 per cent of personal emissions.

- Start carpooling
- Take public transit
- Walk, roller blade or bike
- Maintain car, tire pressure
- Reduce speed, idling
- Use bike couriers

Home heating causes 22 per cent of personal emissions--cooling more.

- Upgrade insulation, caulking and weatherstripping
- Install energy efficient furnace, windows, set back thermostat
- Plant trees, use fans, blinds and limit use of air conditioners

Water and water heating account for seven per cent of personal emissions.

- Fix leaky faucet, install aerator
- Install low-flow showerhead, toilet
- Reduce water temperature
- Install solar panels

Lights and appliances produce seven per cent of personal emissions.

- Turn lights, computer off when not in use
- Switch to compact fluorescents
- Dry clothes on line

Miscellaneous:

- Change lawn care methods
- Plant trees
- Recycle more, waste less
- Avoid non-recyclable packaging
- Start composting
- Buy green power

October 2001 *alive* #228

### **Schmeiser on a World Circuit**

Recent events in the farm community have greatly reduced my level of cynicism about our individual rights in the global village and the international institutions we have established to protect our rights.

One event I am thinking of in particular is the recent trip to Rome of the well-known Bruno, Saskatchewan, grain and oilseed farmer, Percy Schmeiser. Since his trial in Saskatoon, June 2000, Schmeiser has been invited to speak at meetings on five of our six continents.

His most recent trip was the result of an invitation to speak at the sixth extraordinary session of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. The topic of the conference was "International Undertaking of Plant Genetic Resources." Schmeiser was asked to speak on the topic of "farmers' rights to save their own seed." The conference was attended by representatives from 170 of the world's nations.

To me the most sensational part of Schmeiser's trip to Rome is the fact that he doesn't represent any provincial or national farm organization, nor is he an elected politician: he represents only himself. However, the reason he was invited is because he has had the courage to defend himself in a Saskatoon federal court of law when the transnational corporation Monsanto charged him with using their genetically altered Roundup Ready canola without a contract. Schmeiser lost the case but he has gained international recognition as a farmer willing to fight for a cause he believes in despite great legal expense to his family. However, with the help of donations to a special trust fund established for this purpose, he has launched an appeal against Monsanto.

While in Rome, Schmeiser addressed two luncheon sessions of delegates, one with African delegates and one with delegates from all nations. The rest of the time was spent meeting with smaller groups of ambassadors from non-governmental organizations and other interested people. He said the vast majority of the representatives are concerned about world food security as a result of genetically modified foods or organisms (GMOs). They see GMOs as a threat to the world's food supply. Schmeiser received no support from the Canadian and US representatives. In fact they did everything possible to keep him from speaking.

Canadian and US farm policy is obviously dominated by transnational corporations. Both countries have the Plant Breeders Rights legislation, which gives transnational corporations the right to patent and control our seed supply and our agriculture policies.

At the United Nations' conference in Rome, Schmeiser said many important decisions were made, but the following four were outstanding:

1. *Acknowledging* that the conservation, exploration, collection, characterization, evaluation and documentation of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture are essential in meeting the goals of the Rome Declaration on World Food Security and for sustainable agricultural development for this and future generations. And that the capacity of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to undertake such tasks needs urgently to be reinforced;
2. *Acknowledging further* that plant genetic resources for food and agriculture are the raw material indispensable for crop genetic improvement, whether by means of farmers' selection, classical plant breeding or modern biotechnologies, and are essential in adapting to unpredictable environmental changes and future human needs;
3. *Affirming* that the past, present and future contributions of farmers in all regions of the world, particularly those in centres of origin and diversity, in conserving, improving and making available these resources, is the basis of Farmers' Rights, as unanimously agreed through resolution 4/89 of the 25th session of the FAO Conference;
4. *Affirming also* that the rights to save, use, exchange and sell farm-saved seed and other propagating material without restriction, and to participate in decision-making regarding the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, are fundamental to the realization of Farmers' Rights and should be monitored at national and international levels.

Schmeiser is also invited to the next session of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in Rome this November and he will speak to an American conference of Roman Catholic bishops this fall.



February 2002 *alive* #232**Biological Terrorism a New Threat**

Saskatchewan grain and oilseed farmer Percy Schmeiser has added a new term to his vocabulary: biological terrorism. It means the deliberate injection or placing of a gene unknowingly in a farmer's seed, grain or oilseed that would damage large acres of growing crops or cause illness or death to large numbers of people.

Schmeiser won the Mahatma Gandhi award for fighting in a non-violent way to protect farmers' rights to save their own seed. Gandhi's grandchildren presented the award in India on Oct. 2, 2000. Since that time Schmeiser has been on speaking trips on five continents.

Schmeiser was made aware of biological terrorism on his recent trip to Africa in the fall of 2001, during which time the attack on the World Trade Center in New York occurred. Since arriving home, he has received calls from scientists worldwide asking why "biological" terrorism has not been introduced into national public debate, and why the possibility of using unapproved toxic chemicals on fruits and vegetables is not being discussed.

After arriving home from Africa last October, Schmeiser went to the University of Texas in Austin to speak to a group of academics who he thought were going to challenge him on his campaign to defend farmers' rights to save their own seed. To his surprise, he received a standing ovation. The following week he travelled to George Washington University in Washington, DC, to speak to an environmental conference of 2,000 people and received another standing ovation. In November, Schmeiser spoke to the College of Catholic Bishops at their annual conference in Kansas City, and also at the annual meeting of the Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations in Rome.

He says that he is getting strong support from academics in both Africa and the United States. However, while he was in Africa, representatives of Monsanto followed him to almost every meeting—sometimes five meetings a day! A company representative was even brazen enough on one occasion to demand that Monsanto be given equal platform time. The sponsors of that meeting told the representative to "Get lost! If you want to speak to a meeting, call your own."

While in South Africa, Schmeiser spoke to several large landowners. The next day, they held a meeting and all cancelled their contracts with Monsanto for genetically modified corn seed for this crop year.

As a result of Schmeiser's experiences, it has become abundantly obvious that there is a war between transnational pesticide and GMO-seed corporations and family farmers, particularly organic farmers. If farmers win, it will be the end of chemical agriculture. If the organic farmers lose, it will mean a great loss to both consumers and the environment.

Since I talked to Schmeiser about biological terrorism, I have written to the leaders of several national environmental organizations, asking them to develop policies demanding that the federal Plant Breeders' Rights Act be rescinded. Prior to the passing of the Act in 1991, we either saved our own seed or bought seed from a neighbour or registered seed grower. This was a very safe system of providing seed for our farms, and it's still the safest way I know of to protect our seed supply on Canadian farms amidst today's fears of terrorism.

It is to be hoped that consumers who are concerned about their food and health will let their MLAs and MPs know before the next election that they support the certified organic family farm. Schmeiser's experiences certainly highlight that political action is necessary to fight for farmers' rights and protect against the threat of biological terrorism.

September 23, 2002 Davidson Leader

**Government must rescind *Plant Breeders Rights Act***

Open letter to:  
The Hon. Lyle VanClief  
Minister of Agriculture  
Government of Canada  
Ottawa, K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. VanClief:

Re: The Federal Government must rescind the Plant Breeders Rights Act to restore the family farm as a basic unit of agriculture production.

Here in Saskatoon the three judge Federal Appeal Court Panel announced their decision on the Percy Schmeiser case on Sept. 3, 2002. The judges ruled that it wouldn't have mattered what Schmeiser knew or didn't know, it wouldn't have mattered what he did or didn't do or how the Round-Up Ready canola seeds were spread on his property.

They ruled that "patent law" superceded any farmers' rights and Schmeiser was guilty of growing Round-Up Ready canola on his farm whether the seed blew off passing trucks, the pollen drifted in and polluted his canola or bees carried the pollen in. They ruled that he was growing Round-Up Ready canola without a contract or paying the \$15 per acre technology fee. The judges rejected his 17-point appeal of Judge Andrew MacKay's ruling that was heard May 15-16, 2002 in Saskatoon.

This decision not only affects Percy Schmeiser, but also all farmers in Canada who may have GMO seed that is patented "appear" on their land. In fact, farmers all around the globe are very upset about this federal appeal court decision, and have been phoning Schmeiser continuously following the Saskatoon decision. There is little doubt that this will affect Canada's reputation of marketing quality grain and oilseeds all round the world.

In the meantime, 72 year old Bruno, Sask., farmer, Percy Schmeiser, has in reality moved from being a canola farmer on his 1400-acre farm to the status of world ambassador. Schmeiser is leading the fight internationally for farmers' rights to save their own seed.

It all started when the transnational corporation Monsanto charged Schmeiser with using Round-Up Ready canola without a contract and without paying the \$15 per acre technology fee that Monsanto charges for using their genetically engineered canola seed.

Schmeiser spent two and a half weeks in May, 2000, in a federal court in Saskatoon defending his position that he didn't know how the Round-Up Ready canola ended up in his field in 1997- 98. He said that the seed could have blown off a passing truck, pollen could have drifted from neighbouring fields or bees could have carried the pollen, all of which have been proven possible since that time.

Federal court Judge Andrew MacKay ruled in March, 2001, that Schmeiser "knew or should have known" that his fields were Round-Up Ready tolerant. He brought down

his decision in March, 2001, almost a year after the June, 2000, trial and fined him \$19,832 in damages. Schmeiser appealed. Finally, on May 15- 16, 2002, that appeal was heard. However, in April just before the appeal was heard, Judge Andrew MacKay raised the fine to \$153,000. Apparently, to have a judge up the fine almost a year later is unprecedented in Canadian law.

During the appeal which was heard in federal court in Saskatoon, Monsanto offered Schmeiser an out-of-court settlement of \$105,935 Schmeiser has appealed the \$153,000 federal appeal court ruling. He is also appealing the case to the Supreme Court of Canada.

Since the first Schmeiser trial in June, 2000, he has literally been traveling the globe as a world ambassador for farmers. In September, 2000 he was invited by India's Research Foundation for Science, Ecology and Technology to spend two weeks traveling and speaking in India. While in India he received an award he didn't expect. He was presented with India's Mahatma Gandhi Award. This is India's highest award. It was presented on the 131st anniversary of Gandhi's birth. He received the award because of his nonviolent fight in a Saskatoon courtroom to protect farmers' rights to save their own seed.

Schmeiser spent two weeks speaking at various universities in India. On one occasion he was one of the speakers that addressed a group of 300,000 Indian farmers which is more than all the farmers we have in Canada. We probably have between 225,000 and 250,000 farmers in Canada.

Since that time, it has been go, go, go. He has been back to Bangladesh, Australia twice, South Africa twice, Europe twice, the Camerons and many times to the United States (even Missouri where Monsanto's headquarters are) and to seven South American countries. Consumers may want to know what the "family farm" system of production means to them. Well, corporate farming means more and more pesticides and GMO seeds. Before the Plant Breeders Rights Act legislation, taxpayers had political control of agriculture, but now transnationals control it.

Well, Mr. VanClief, you may not realize it, but people are becoming more and more concerned about their food. Mothers and grandmothers are becoming more and more concerned about the increasingly polluted world their children and grandchildren are growing up in. Your government is and has been for many years supporting chemical agriculture only and more recently GMOs.

Consumers and taxpayers are paying large amounts of their taxes supporting chemical agriculture for the research, extension and promotion of GMOs. You are going to have to seriously consider before the next election, if you are going to switch your support to the family farm by rescinding the Plant Breeders Rights Act legislation or if you are going to continue to let the transnational corporations run the farms and control the farmers. Perhaps it is time you invited Percy Schmeiser to Ottawa to consult him on farm policy. He has been invited everywhere else.

Schmeiser says everyone he meets in his travels is very friendly except for Monsanto representatives and Canadian diplomats. I think Canadian diplomats should be instructed to support a good cause on behalf of the Canadian government.

Elmer Laird, President Back To The Farm  
Research Foundation

June 23, 2003 Davidson Leader

**Schmeiser keeps busy with public appearances**

What has Bruno farmer and international farm activist Percy Schmeiser been doing lately? Well, Mike Shymko and I had lunch with Percy and his wife Louise and Darren Qualman, executive secretary of the National Farmers Union in Saskatoon June 17 and heard of a few things. The most important thing to happen to the Schmeisers lately is the fact they have won their request to appeal their court case with transnational corporation Monsanto to the Supreme Court of Canada on Jan. 20, 2004. The surprising fact is the court case will only last for one day. The two parties involved, Schmeiser and his lawyer Terry J. Zakreski of Saskatoon will have to engage an Ottawa lawyer to present their case and Monsanto will have to engage an Ottawa lawyer to speak on their behalf. Anyone who wishes to be an “intervenor” on behalf of either party will have to engage an Ottawa lawyer. However, all intervenors on each side are only allowed one lawyer. Since Schmeiser won his right to appeal, organizations from all over the world are requesting “intervenor” status. They will all have to express their case through one lawyer.

In case any *Davidson Leader* readers haven't heard about the case, Allyce Bass of the St. Louis Dispatch (St. Louis, Missouri) described the case as follows: “Monsanto claims that Schmeiser knowingly replanted the company's genetically modified canola seeds that were found in his crops. Schmeiser, however, says he didn't knowingly plant any of the seeds and claims Monsanto should be barred from patenting life forms or requiring farmers to sign agreements that prohibit them from planting the seeds they harvest. While the lower courts have ruled in Monsanto's favour, Canada's highest court this month said it would hear Schmeiser's appeal.

“This time Schmeiser thinks it will be different. That's because the Canadian Supreme Court, in a case involving a genetically engineered mouse that Harvard University patented in several countries, recently ruled that higher life forms cannot be patented in Canada. He says he hopes that decision will tip the scales in his favour and cost Monsanto its Canadian patents.”

Schmeiser made the above statement when he was a guest speaker at the Biodiversification Conference held in St. Louis to protest the World Agriculture Forum's congress. Incidentally, this is the seventh biodiversification conference that has been held. It was held in St. Louis, Monsanto's home town. In an interview with the St. Louis Dispatch, Schmeiser, now 72, said he has spent \$270,000 in legal costs to battle Monsanto and said he'll use whatever good years he has left “to fight Monsanto”.

He contends that Monsanto's non-disclosure and technology agreements violate farmers' free speech and what he believes is a farmer's right to reuse seeds.

Schmeiser's main concern today about GMOs is the fact that drug companies are genetically engineering pharmaceuticals into plants. In fact he said it has been reported there were 300 test plots of this type of GMO production this last year. He said, “This is the cheapest way drug companies can produce drugs. They are growing them in plants and then processing the plants to retrieve the drugs.”

He went on to say, “The danger in GMO medically engineered plants is the pollen drift. It may end up in the wrong plants. For example, if a person just had surgery and were to eat a food that contained a blood thinner it would very likely be a disaster.”

I asked Schmeiser what he had been doing prior to the St. Louis conference. He said since the beginning of 2003 he had spoken at: a conference at Aberdeen, S.D.; University of Alberta in Edmonton; a conference in Brazil; University of Regina; University of British Columbia, Vancouver; University of Lansing, Mich.; Government Agriculture Committee of Vermont, six organic farmer meetings in Vermont; a meeting north of Rome, Italy; University of Massachusetts; University of Wisconsin; University of Texas, Austin; University of Calgary and a meeting at Red Deer, Alta.

I asked him about his future plans. He said he was going to Sacramento, Calif., June 21, to speak or take part in opposition to a conference the American government has sponsored promoting GMOs.

The U.S. government has invited agriculture ministers from all over the world to convince them that GMOs are the way to go in the future. Following that conference he will be home for a day and then he is going to Japan for two weeks. He is speaking to organic farm groups from one end of Japan to the other. He will arrive home July 17. On July 19 he is speaking to a meeting in North Vancouver and later at Salt Spring Island, B.C. He said, “The main reason they want me in Japan is because as a result of my case with Monsanto, I can testify that pollen does drift from genetically engineered plants. And of course, he will be voicing his opinion on farmers rights to save their own seed and use it. The Mulroney government passed the Plant Breeders Rights Act in 1991.

It is the act that gives transnational corporations priority rights over family farmers and permits them to patent their seed and sell it. The three federal court judges that heard Schmeiser’s appeal May 16 to 16, 2002 released their decision on Sept. 3, 2002.

They said, “It didn’t matter what Schmeiser knew or didn’t know, it didn’t matter what Schmeiser did or didn’t do, the corporation’s rights superseded farmers rights. It was a ruling that affected the rights of all family farmers across Canada. Schmeiser is indeed internationally known—far more than most prominent Canadians.

October 25, 2004 Davidson Leader

### **Monsanto's win will have ripple effects**

It appears that in Bruno, Sask. farmer Percy Schmeiser's legal case with Monsanto, the tail is wagging the dog. On Jan. 20, 2004, the Supreme Court of Canada heard the Schmeiser vs Monsanto case. Schmeiser lost and at that time large sums of money had been spent or were owed. The Court decided that Schmeiser didn't have to pay the transnational drug and chemical companies' legal cost of \$200,000. Schmeiser's own legal costs have never been made public, but would have been substantial to defend himself. His legal battle with Monsanto had gone on for six years. Some time during the six years (I don't have a date) Monsanto had filed a million dollar caveat against Schmeiser's nine quarters of land and his home. Schmeiser had also filed a charge against Monsanto for \$10,000,000 for polluting his own variety of canola that he had saved for about 40 years. Schmeiser was relieved that the Supreme Court in effect returned financial control of his home and farm to him and his wife. He dropped the charges against Monsanto because he and his wife had just spent six years in court so to speak and at 73 years old, he didn't want to spend the remainder of his life in court.

However, on Oct. 18, 2004 at 10a.m., Louise Schmeiser (Percy's wife) summoned Monsanto to small claims court in Humboldt, Sask. demanding payment of \$140. Following the Oct. 18 court appearance Percy Schmeiser issued the following statement:

Louise Schmeiser has filed papers with a small claims court in Humboldt seeking \$140 in damages from Monsanto.

Schmeiser says that is what it cost her to remove Monsanto's Roundup Ready Canola plants from her organic garden and nearby shelter belt.

"Monsanto said that if anyone sprays Roundup on any plant and it doesn't die...they will come and remove it," says Percy Schmeiser, who is acting as Louise's legal counsel. "They failed to do it."

Schmeiser says the case has been adjourned until next March to give Monsanto's lawyers time to prepare a defense.

Seven years ago, Monsanto took Percy Schmeiser to court. The chemical giant said Schmeiser was growing the company's genetically modified canola without permission, and without paying for the right to do so.

The Supreme Court ruled that Monsanto's patent was valid, but Schmeiser was also victorious as he did not have to pay Monsanto's Technology Use Fee of \$15 an acre, profits, damages and Monsanto's legal costs.

"The Supreme Court ruled Monsanto owns and controls the gene, so the liability issue now follows the flow of the gene," says Schmeiser. "Monsanto is totally liable for contamination and pollution of anybody's field now."

Monsanto representatives refused to comment on the case.

Following is the statement of claim signed by Louise Schmeiser on June 14, 2004: Monsanto Canada Inc. on Nov.30, 2002 was billed \$140 for removal by hand of Monsanto's Genetically Altered Roundup Ready Canola plants. This was from land location SEM-25-38-W2.

Monsanto's stated policy, re: paragraph 96, 97 and 126 is that if any land is contaminated or polluted by Monsanto's Roundup Ready Canola, and if they are notified they will come and remove the seeds or plants. Although they were notified at least two or three times by mail to do this, they failed to come and remove the plants. Because of possible contamination of a nearby organic garden and shelterbelt, the plants had to be picked and removed by hand, before the seed stage and burnt. Pictures taken.

The Plaintiff is therefore claiming the amount of \$140 as well as the \$20 cost of issuing the summons in these proceedings.

The decision by the Supreme Court of Canada that Monsanto owns the gene in GMO Canola is going to make a difference in future claims against Monsanto where there has been pollution of for example - organic crops.

In the meantime, Schmeiser is off to Italy on a speaking tour to further his international campaign fighting for farmers rights to save their own seed. The last time he went to Italy, they knighted him. In Italy he is Sir Percy Schmeiser.



March 21, 2005 Davidson Leader

### **Government needs to Rescind Plant Breeders Rights**

Open letter to Prime Minister Paul Martin, Agriculture Minister Andy Mitchell, Environment Minister Stephen Dion and MP Wayne Easter:

Farm activist Percy Schmeiser of Bruno, Saskatchewan has been traveling the world for over four years campaigning for farmers rights to save their own seed and opposing GMOs. On Feb. 9, 2005 he was in Bangkok, Thailand speaking to a large United Nations meeting. Schmeiser was made aware before he spoke that Canada's Federal Government's Department of the Environment had 17 people at the conference campaigning for GMOs and Terminator seeds. A press report issued from the conference said:

A Canadian government attempt to change United Nations policy on controversial genetically modified 'terminator seeds' was defeated at a United Nations-sponsored gathering in Bangkok on Friday. Critics accused the Canadian representatives of promoting the commercialization of terminator seeds by advocating field trials at the UN meeting.

The vote by a subsidiary group of the UN Convention on Biodiversity ended a week of heated debate that included a fiery final speech by Percy Schmeiser, the Canadian farmer known for his courtroom battles over genetically modified seed with bio-tech giant Monsanto.

The Canadian government has acted shamefully, Schmeiser told the UN delegates:

'It is supporting a dangerous, anti-farmer technology that aims to eliminate the rights of farmers to save and re-use harvested seed. Instead of representing the goodwill of the Canadian people or attending to the best interests of the biodiversity treaty, the Canadian government is fronting for the multinational gene giants who stand to win enormous profits with the release of Terminator seeds around the world.

Early last week, Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration (ETC Group) leaked Canadian government documents directing the Canadian delegation position on sterile-seed technology, which the ETC Group head called "the most controversial and immoral agricultural application of genetic engineering so far."

While Canada took a lead role in drafting the proposal, a coalition led by Norway, Sweden, Austria, the European Community, Cuba, Peru and Liberia successfully opposed it.

Well, Gentlemen, only about 2 per cent of the Canadian Population are farmers. However, we all like to eat if we get a chance. Unfortunately more people in Saskatchewan are going hungry every year. The Regina Food Bank reported a 37 per cent increase in demand for food in 2004.

The transnational corporations (and on Feb. 9, 2005 Federal Environment) were promoting GMOs in Bangkok, Thailand which is not the solution to the world hunger problem. The transnational corporations are promoting GMOs so they will have a stronger or tougher plant their pesticides won't kill when farmers are spraying because

weeds are building up a resistance to herbicides all over the world. The transnationals want to keep selling herbicides.

Dr. Wee-chong Tan professor of biochemistry at the Lester B. Pearson University reports that if we keep using increased amounts of stronger herbicides as we have to do to kill weeds today we will soon destroy the productivity of the soil, when this happens very few people will eat at all I have two recommendations:

1. Rescind the Plant Breeders Rights Legislation that gives transnational corporations control of Canadian farms.

2. Abandon the federal government's "chemical or pesticide only" policy for agriculture and adopt the policies set out in the year 2000 report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development chaired by Charles Caccia. It recommends subsidizing the transition of all farmers to organic farming.

If we don't start cleaning up our environment and food supply federal government dollars will not save our National Medicare Program. Only a clean environment and a healthy certified organic nutritious food supply and unpolluted water will. Press reports indicate that 55 per cent of Canadians (including all people who eat at the House of Commons) eat organic food, 70 per cent is imported, when do we start growing our own certified organic food.

Elmer Laird, president  
Back To The Farm  
Research Foundation

November 15, 2004 Davidson Leader

### **Chemical companies need to consider legacy they're leaving**

Open letter to:

Reuben A. Shelton,  
Assistant General Council - Litigation, Monsanto Company

I was pleased to meet you last week, Nov. 1-2, while we were both attending the class action lawsuit between Saskatchewan Organic Directorate and Monsanto and Bayer at the Saskatoon, Saskatchewan Court House. I was pleased to have the opportunity to give you copies of two studies and one article that are on topics that are very important to all of us while we continue to live on this planet.

1. A series of articles (60 pages- in total) by Dr. Weechong Tan, a leading biochemist from the Lester B. Pearson International University at Victoria, B.C. Dr. Tan says that if we keep on using pesticides at the rate we are using them now we will soon destroy the productivity of the soil.

2. A study by the National Farmers Union entitled "The Farm Crisis, Bigger Farms, and the Myths of Competition and Efficiency", published Nov. 20, 2003. The National Farmers Union is the only farm organization in Canada that is a direct annual dues paying, farm family policy organization with a national charter.

3. A copy of *The Davidson Leader* that has a copy of an open letter that I wrote to Clay Serby, Deputy Premier, Province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Serby was a recent cancer patient. I am interested to find out if he has access to certified organic food. I don't know if you are on the board of top policy people with Monsanto, but I am sure you have access to that board and will pass this letter along to them for their information.

Corporations always have a philosophy or a policy to exploit a product until it is exhausted and then they take their money out of the project and invest in another enterprise as quietly and as efficiently as possible. Monsanto is no different and has made a major effort to exploit farmers internationally for as much as they can possibly extract by selling them pesticides for many years. However, Monsanto seems completely unaware that their target has reached the stage of no longer being exploitable. The National Farmers Union study shows that Canadian farm income is at rock bottom.

The average age of farmers is 59 years old and the study shows their income is at rock bottom. If Monsanto were exploiting a coal mine or an oil field they would be aware that there is no more coal in the mine or oil in the oil field. However, their all powerful chemical lobby has silenced scientists that would normally speak out for fear of being discredited. Biochemist Dr. Tan has said that "the increasing use of pesticides will destroy the productivity of the soil".

Organic farmers know that Mother Nature is a powerful old girl and will defend her resources. Monsanto still thinks that man can control nature. Mother Nature will win in the long haul and therefore it is time for Monsanto to fold up their chemical business before they lose their investment and become discredited as a corporation for polluting the environment and destroying the productivity of the soil.

Pesticides were developed in World Wars I and II for biological control weapons. Actually they were obsolete when they were- introduced into agriculture 55 years ago if you take human, domestic animals and wildlife safety into account. Unfortunately, some entrepreneur decided to adapt them to agriculture following World War II. It was relatively easy to do. Millions of young men come home from the war to Canada and the United States. They had won the war, they had conquered, (I was one of them). It wasn't difficult to convince us that we would conquer nature the way we conquered the enemy and we tried (I sprayed for 20 years) and then quit for economic reasons. Younger farmers grew up in a pesticide culture.

However, right from the beginning both weeds and pests started building up a resistance to agriculture chemicals. Later, Monsanto developed GMO Canola because their Round-Up Ready herbicide they were using to kill the weeds was also killing the canola. Then stronger chemicals were required per acre and more of them. Spraying season now lasts at least seven months a year. When I quit spraying in 1969 I used not over 3 1/2 ounces of 2,4- D per acre and spraying season lasted three weeks.

Now chemical farmers are using 10-12 ounces Of 2,4-D per acre. Today agriculture costs are soaring and income has hit rock bottom. Today a record number of farmers are having auction sales and are getting out while they can, or before they go bankrupt.

Politicians no longer declare their support for the "family farm" any more as a basic unit of agriculture production. They are waiting for the transnational drug and chemical companies to take over the family farms. We just celebrated Armistice day last Thursday, Nov. 11. Personally, I don't think World War II will be over until we abandon the use of chemical pesticides and start cleaning up our environment.

Here in Saskatchewan we have the highest rate of breast and cervical cancer and the second highest rate- of prostate cancer in Canada. We use a third of the pesticides (pesticides and herbicides) that are used in Canada and I know pesticides cause cancer. Recent press reports are predicting that cancer rates will soar in the next few years. The politicians are attempting to solve the health care crisis with money. It isn't going to work. Only good nutritious food and a clean environment will preserve our health care program. When our health care program goes down the drain farmers and all low income citizens will be in worse financial position than ever. They will have to pay their medical bills

Today, German scientists are firmly stating that organic food is more nutritious than chemically produced food. Even some of my chemical farmer friends on coffee row agree with the German scientist. North American nutritionists who are frequently interviewed on television never mention it. The chemical lobby is too strong. Here in Canada the Christian church has not decided yet that it is a sin to poison people, domestic animals or wildlife with toxic chemicals. Governments have not decide that it is a crime either.

For several years Dr. Allan Cesna of the National Hydrology Water Institute has reported that all surface water and one—third of the deep wells arc polluted with herbicides. This means our water and food are polluted all the time (except organic) and our air is polluted during the seven-month spraying season we have in Saskatchewan.

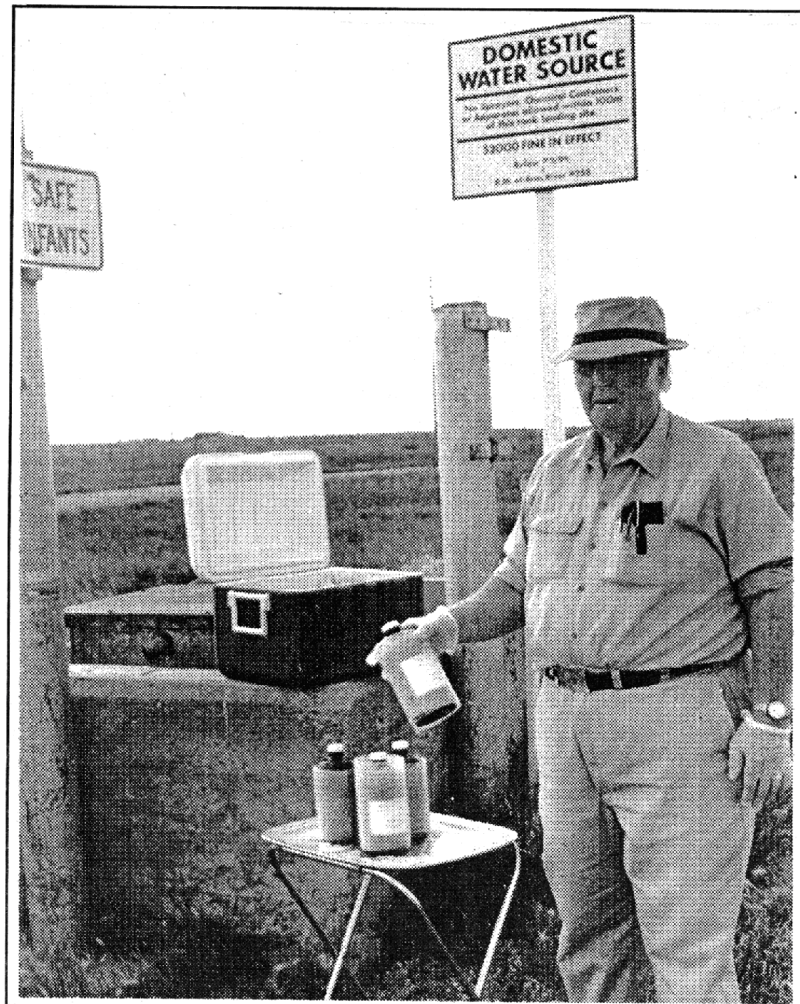
Frequently I think back to the world I grew up in. I was born in 1924. During my mother's pregnancy that brought me into the world and her life prior to that she was

never exposed to food, water and air that was polluted with pesticides. I wasn't either until I was 25 years old. Children born today are exposed to pesticides right from the time of conception and in many cases their mothers have been too.

Well, Mr. Shelton, you are a family man, you said you had a wife and three children. Both you and the directors of Monsanto will have to decide very soon, what kind of world do you want your children to inherit?

Elmer Laird, president  
Back to The Farm  
Research Foundation

# IV. HEALTHY LIVING



Laird prepares to collect four water samples at the Airport well. These signs warn people that water drawn at this well is not safe for infants. Another sign states that sprayers, chemical containers and apparatus are not allowed within 100 metres of the site.

Davidson Leader, 20/08/01

"If any Medicare program is going to survive and succeed it must be built on a foundation of supplying all citizens with pure, unpolluted water, an adequate supply of certified organic food, clean air and a clean environment, otherwise it is doomed to failure."

--- Elmer Laird, July 23, 2001

*In this section, Elmer Laird discusses various aspects health and the system and how they relate to organic and conventional agriculture, beginning with nutrition. Through organic farming, nutrients in the soil are conserved, which translates to health food. Likewise, pesticide residues have been detected in food produced conventionally and may be responsible for many health problems.*

*Cancer is a disease that has affected everyone in Saskatchewan, whether directly or indirectly. Laird draws parallels between the rise in cancer and the rise in pesticide use. He warns that these carcinogens are present not only on farms, but also in the food we eat and in the air we breathe. Reproductive health is also affected by chemicals present in the environment; articles concerning this discuss how men, women, and fetus may be affected. He also discusses how the toxic chemicals that are sprayed into our environment affect children, the elderly, wildlife, and those with chemical sensitivities.*

*The contamination of water is another cause for great concern, as the quality of water can have great effects on the wildlife, plants, farm animals, and people who rely on it. When Davidson, SK, had five cases of infant cancer, Laird initiated a program to test the community's water.*

*People's health is closely related to diet and the environment, both which are deeply affected by agricultural practices. For this reason, Laird proposes that the provincial government re-structure so that departments concerning health, agriculture, and the environment work more closely together and don't have contradicting policies.*

## NUTRITION

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December 12, 1994 Davidson Leader

Health Minister Louise Simard frequently boasts about the Provincial Government's "Wellness program." However, I am always left with a hollow feeling because the "Wellness program" doesn't seem to have a good foundation. She never elaborates on what kind of agriculture and environmental policies are necessary to promote "Wellness".

In the past we as both a province and a nation have talked about how to produce volumes of food but spent very little time talking about nutrition. In turn, we have not discussed the health of the nation in relation to the health of the soil or if there is adequate nutrition in the soil to supply the plants that provide our food. In fact, it is these three closely associated groups that are responsible for the health of the nation. The term "health care insurance" is a misnomer. Our present health care insurance is really illness insurance and only comes into play once the individual becomes ill. When this happens, in most instances, it is a result of inadequate nutrition or exposure to toxic substances in the environment. The cost of illness (Health Care) is directly related to our success or failure as producers and suppliers of nutrition and our methods of environmental protection.

Soil specialists for several years have reported that after farming prairie soils for fifty years, fifty percent of the fertility is gone. No one is reporting how much nutrition has been lost in the food supply as a result of loss of soil fertility. However, evidence of loss of fertility is the fact that Health Food stores in Canada are experiencing a phenomenal growth as a result of Canadians buying vitamins and minerals to supplement their diet. There are also a lot of supplements being fed to livestock and poultry.

Presently our Saskatchewan Government is spending about one third of its total budget on "Health Care" or about \$1,500 per capita. In addition, the Federal Government is spending about 11% of its budget on Health Care. Perhaps we should find out if there is a relationship between the Health Care crisis and the loss of nutrition in the soil.

In the evolution of the development of prairie soils micro-nutrients that passed through man, animals and birds were deposited close to where the food was grown. However, today our agricultural products in the main are shipped to large population centers all over the world and with the assistance of the flush toilet, the micro-nutrients in human waste are washed into rivers and out to sea. The micro-nutrients in the waste from large livestock and poultry operations are usually distributed unevenly on the land or sometimes into water supplies. Only the birds and wild animals continue with the original plan of waste disposal. To my knowledge, only the Chinese recognize human waste as a resource. They have a night soil program that returns human waste to the land. I cannot find anyone measuring micro-nutrient losses from soil to sea. We do not have any inventory of micro-nutrients in the soil so we don't really know how long our supply will last or if it is already exhausted. I suspect that commercial fertilizers that artificially stimulate production, exhaust the micro-nutrient supply in the soil over a period of time,



and in the long haul plants will respond less and less to artificial stimulation. In fact, soil scientists in Europe have reported a drop in food production while fertilizer rates were being increased. I hope a study of micro-nutrient availability and losses will be carried out soon.

There was an international conference this fall in Cairo, Egypt, where they discussed population control. It is estimated that World Population will increase to about 6 billion by the turn of the century. It has almost doubled in the last forty years. I haven't heard about any international conferences to relate soil conservation to food nutrition. Perhaps there should be. Nutrition can only come from the soil or the sea and fish stocks are rapidly disappearing. In the immediate future farmers, agrologists and food processors will have to work together to provide the most nutritious food it is possible to produce. We will need the support, understanding and cooperation of the rest of society to achieve this goal. Nutritionists can prescribe special diets and prepare menus but they will not be very successful if the nutrition is not in the food. We need a system that will make sure the nutrition in the soil is delivered to the consumer's table. Farmers should start thinking of themselves as producers of nutrition.

Today we have the fast food industry that isn't particularly concerned about nutrition. We also have Federal and Provincial government "value added" food policies to maximize profits. They are not delivering nutrition to the consumer's table or money to the farmer's bank account.

The world is hungry for nutrition. We need to move to nutrition- added policies. It will be good for the health of the nation and might put more money into the farmer's bank accounts. The questions are: Will we do it? and will the Health Minister see a need for agriculture policies and environment policies to support her "Wellness program"?

March 11, 2002 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:

Roy Romanow, commissioner on the Future of Health Care in Canada,  
Box 160  
Saskatoon, SK  
S7K 3K4

Dear Mr. Romanow

RE: Recommendation #1:

Recognize that the foundation of Medicare be pure unpolluted water, air and nutritious certified organic food and should be added to the principles of public administration, comprehensiveness, universality, portability and accessibility.

When you were a guest of Lindy Thorson on CBC Radio's noon phone-in program March 5, I asked you if you were going to recommend on your final report that pregnant women, infants, children, people suffering from environmental illness or chemical allergies, hospital patients, school lunch programs, etc. should have unpolluted water and nutritious certified organic food. I was disappointed to hear that you would not recognize pure unpolluted water and nutritious certified organic food as the foundation of Medicare. It is unfortunate that some of the people your age who are making the decisions about Medicare didn't grow up in the world I grew up in. If you did, you would recognize the importance of pure unpolluted water and nutritious food being fundamental to good health.

I am 78 years old and grew up on an half-section farm 16 miles south of Swift Current in what is known as the dust bowl during the Great Depression of the 1930s. I attended a country school, Spring School #2820. Every day we had fresh whole milk from the cows (it wasn't pasteurized, which destroys calcium). We had fresh homemade butter on bread that Mother baked twice a week. We had fresh eggs from the chickens three times a day all summer. (There was no refrigeration to keep the eggs.) If company came on Sunday we ate the roosters. Their sperm was no longer required after spring hatching season. If the milk went sour, Mother made cottage cheese out of it. During the summer, we had fresh vegetables from the garden, during the winter we had potatoes, beets, carrots, turnips and parsnips from the root cellar in the basement. We also had canned vegetables such as corn, peas, beets, string beans tomatoes and onion pickles that were home canned with a minimum amount of preservatives, only vinegar. We had canned fruit that we picked like Saskatoons and chokecherries and pears and apples that we bought. In the summer there was home- canned beef and chicken and in the winter we butchered beef and buried it in the wheat to keep it frozen. Surplus eggs and cream were marketed weekly. Some people said we lived in poverty. This was in the era before we had pesticides being sprayed everywhere that pollute our food, air and water.

There wasn't any antibiotics or growth hormones to add to the diet of beef, pork and chickens then. Income-wise, we didn't have any money to buy pop and junk food. Medical doctors charged \$2 or sometimes accepted a bag of potatoes or a chicken for an office call, however, office calls were few and far between. I don't ever remember my

father having one in the nine years I went to school and Mother's appointments could be counted on the fingers of one hand.

After 50 years of using pesticides here in Saskatchewan, Dr. Allan Cessna, National Hydrology Water Institute (federal environment) says that all surface water in the province is polluted with herbicides and one-third of the wells, some with extremely high rates of pollution. A large majority of Saskatchewanians use surface water for a potable water supply. We use one-third of the pesticides used in Canada, we have the highest rate of breast and cervix cancer in Canada and the second highest rate of prostate cancer. In fact, cancer, chemical sales and food banks are our growth industries. We have over 40 per cent of the cultivated land in Canada, 3 per cent of the population and we are not able to feed ourselves, lineups at the food banks are getting longer. Farmers are driving up to 70 miles to food banks and there is request for four more food banks right now in rural areas. Our farm economy is dominated, exploited and polluted by transnational chemical companies.

I believe there is more undernourished and hungry people in Saskatchewan today than there was in the Depression of the 1930s.

We also have a war going on between the organic farmers and the transnational corporations for control of the farms. On Jan. 10, 2002 the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate launched a class action suit against the transnational corporations Monsanto and Aventis. If the corporations win Canadian taxpayers and consumers will be the big losers. The transnational drug and chemical corporations have us all on a treadmill now. They are selling us large volumes of pesticides that make us sick and large volumes of drugs that are supposed to make us well again. Today we live in a very stressed out society. Both farmers and farm women in many instances, have off-farm jobs to pay their farm expenses. They are driving an average of 50 miles a day, one way.

Well Mr. Romanow, I have described what life was like in the Great Depression and the present depression, or whatever kind of crisis you want to call it. In 1947 I voted for the first health district in Canada. It was the Swift Current health district. Our present Medicare system was built on the foundation on the healthy nutritious diet we had in the Great Depression of the 1930s. Unless we do whatever we can to restore that foundation our Medicare foundation is doomed to failure. You can tinker or fiddle with the policies and the economics all you want, but if you don't fix the foundation, which is to provide an adequate supply of pure unpolluted water, air and certified organic food, we will lose our national Medicare. It was developed in Saskatchewan and only you can decide if Saskatchewan is providing the leadership to cause it to succeed or fail.

Elmer Laird, president,  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

May 13, 2002 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:

Mr. Roy Romanow, Commissioner  
The Future of Health Care in Canada  
Box 160  
Saskatoon, Sask.  
S7K 3K4

Dear Mr. Romanow:

Re: When is the national Medicare Act going to recognize natural therapy or therapists and other role players.

Eighty-four-year-old Betty Johnston is a natural health therapist who has been practicing her therapy from her farm at Milestone, Sask. for 56 years. Her daughter Elizabeth Johnston also practices from an office on the same farm.

Johnston said, "As natural therapists, our backgrounds cover many fields. Some of these are biochemistry, homeopathy, acupuncture, acupressure, herbalism, reflexology, massage therapy, deep tissue work, nutrition, lymphatic drainage, organotherapy and energy balancing."

She is very proud of the fact that she has two granddaughters besides her daughter doing similar work. They are Shellan Kinvig at Calgary, Alta. and Callie Pickering at Portage la Prairie, Man. In fact, she periodically travels to Calgary to help out. In her own community she is referred to as faith healer meaning the neighbours have great faith in ability to help with a great variety of health problems.

She has patients from all over western Canada and as far south as California.

Her business card asks the question, "Do you believe in wellness? We do." It goes on to say, "Over 50 years experience helps us successfully solve your health problems." She said, "Our methods and theories are very basic, gentle and non-invasive, as we believe all health problems have a simple explanation. We focus mostly on the body's circulation. Without good circulation of healthy bodily fluids, all the vitamins in the world will not help.

The national register *Who's Who* acknowledge people in North America for their individual achievements in their specific profession. Betty Johnston's work was recognized in their 2001-2002 edition. The 2001-2002 edition will also be registered at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., as all other editions are.

Today it appears the national Medicare Act only recognizes members of the College of Physicians and Surgeons and partially recognizes chiropractors as health practitioner. They are recognized to the extent that Medicare pays part of your chiropractic fee. Unfortunately very few medical doctors have any training in nutrition. Many natural therapists are helping citizens understand or balance their nutritional intake.

In my first letter to you, I described the world that I grew up in during the depression of the 1930s when we ate mainly wholesome, unpreserved foods. Today the

nutritional value of food is destroyed by both processing and preserving and to some extent, in growing.

The question is: When a food is preserved to last for 2 or 3 years, how can you expect your stomach to get the nutrients out of the food if it is eaten the next week? In addition, the chemical, fertilizers and pesticides that are used extensively today in many instances inhibits the “uptake” of nutrition from the soil to the plant and thus reduces nutrition to the consumer. All nutrition comes from the soil or the sea and fish supplies are rapidly declining so we are relying mainly on the soil for nutrition.

Some farmers know of instances where chemical fertilizers have inhibited the uptake of nutrition from the soil to the plant, but I can’t find anyone who has carried out a study to find out how much of the soil’s nutrition is getting to the consumer’s table. Agriculturists study the uptake of the nutrition from the soil to the plant to make sure the plant has adequate nutrition, but no one studies whether or not it carries on to the consumer’s table.

The business of providing nutrition through health food stores has flourished in the last 30 years. This evidence that the nutritional content of the food supplied throughout the supermarkets has rapidly dropped. Mother Nature developed a built-in nutrient recycling system in both humans and animals.

In the days before “running water” and flush toilets, all human and animal waste was returned to the soil not far from where the food was grown. Neither human nor animal digestive systems are efficient enough to remove all the nutrients from human animal waste and so with the help of lush toilets and rivers, much of the nutrition in food digested by humans flows to the sea, rather than back to the soil.

Animal and also human waste could be composted and moved effectively back to the soil. However, it is rarely done. People who have visited the agricultural areas of China report that China has a “night soil” program where all human waste is moved back to the soil. They report having seen excellent crops being grown on land that has been farmed for over 400 years continuously.

In North America modern agriculture and processing technology puts a great variety of products on the supermarket shelves but the presence of a rapidly growing health food industry indicates that food products are obviously very short of nutrition. Mother Nature will only release a very limited amount of nutrients from the soil in any one year.

However, it is up to man to recycle the human and animal waste to rebuild the soil.

### **Conclusion**

1. Ms. Betty Johnston and her family are excellent examples of natural therapists who have, and continue to, supplement the formal Medicare system on a “fee for service” basis.
2. Certified organic farmers are working hard to produce nutritious healthy unpolluted food and help clean up the environment. They get very little recognition from either federal or provincial governments. In fact all governments spend large volumes of money on the promotion of chemical agriculture and more recently GMOs. They have ignored the organic farmers to the extent many certification organizations have had to apply for registration with the United States Department of Agriculture.

**Recommendations**

1. That certified organic farmers, soil specialists, agricultural biologists, natural therapy practitioners, chiropractors and medical doctors be recognized as participants in a team to provide maximum standards of health care in Canada.
2. The team leaders should be the federal and provincial ministers of health. The agriculture and environment ministers should be directly responsible to the minister of health for the purpose of developing a common objective of producing nutritious food, pure air and water, and a clean environment to support the national Medicare program.

Elmer Laird, President  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

June 19, 2006 Davidson Leader

**Proper diet and nutrition only solution to health-care crisis**

Open letter to: Premier Lorne Calvert

Mark Wartman, Minister of Agriculture

MLA Lon Borgerson, Legislative Secretary of Organic Farming

Re: e-mail published on March 4, 2006 by the Inter Press Service

Title: New Studies Back Benefits of Organic Diet

Published on Saturday, March 4, 2006 by the Inter Press Service

<http://cornucopia.org/index.php/102>

by Stephen Leahy, Toronto, Canada

It states, "Organic foods protect children from the toxins in pesticides, while foods grown using modern, intensive agricultural techniques contain fewer nutrients and minerals than they did 60 years ago, according to two new scientific studies.

A U.S. research team from Emory University in Atlanta analyzed urine samples from children ages three to 11 who ate only organic foods and found that they contained virtually no metabolites of two common pesticides, malathion and chlorpyrifos.

However, once the children returned to eating conventionally grown foods, concentrations of these pesticide metabolites quickly climbed as high as 263 parts per billion, says the study published Feb. 21.

Organic crops are grown without the chemical pesticides and fertilizers that are common in intensive agriculture.

There was a "dramatic and immediate protective effect" against the pesticides while consuming organically grown foods, said Chensheng Lu, an assistant professor at the Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University.

The e-mail continues "These findings, in addition to the results of another study published in Britain earlier this month, have fuelled the debate about the benefits of organically grown food as compared to conventional, mass-produced foods, involving academics, food and agro-industry executives and activists in the global arena. According to the new British analysis of government nutrition data on meat and dairy products from the 1930s and from 2002, the mineral content of milk, cheese and beef declined as much as 70 per cent in that period.

"These declines are alarming," Ian Tokelove, spokesman for The Food Commission that published the results of the study, told *Tierramérica*. The Commission is a British non-governmental organization advocating for healthier, safer food.

The research found that parmesan cheese had 70 per cent less magnesium and calcium, beef steaks contained 55 percent less iron, chicken had 31 per cent less calcium and 69 percent less iron, while milk also showed a large drop in iron along with a 21 per cent decline in magnesium. Copper, an important trace mineral (an essential nutrient that is consumed in tiny quantities), also declined 60 per cent in meats and 90 per cent in dairy products.

"It seems likely that intensive farming methods are responsible for this," Tokelove said from his office in London.

Although controversial, a number of other studies have also found differences between conventionally produced foods and foods grown organically or under more natural conditions. Organic fruits and vegetables had significantly higher levels of cancer-fighting antioxidants, according to a 2003 study in *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*. *The organic plants produced these chemical compounds to help fight off insects and competing plants*, researchers said.

The e-mail carries a report from the British Soil Association. It states a 2001 report by Britain's Soil Association looked at 400 nutritional research studies and came to similar conclusions: foods grown organically had more minerals and vitamins. "Modern plant breeding for quick growth and high yields could also be affecting the nutritional quality," says Katherine Tucker, director of the nutritional epidemiology program at Tufts University in the northeastern U.S. city of Boston, Massachusetts. Lower levels of minerals in food we eat is cause for concern, she says, stressing that "magnesium, calcium and other minerals are very important for proper nutrition." Good nutrition and exercise are the major factors that can make a difference in the incidence of many diseases, including cancer, according to Tucker.

She recommends eating unprocessed foods, meat from free-range animals, and grains, fruits and vegetables grown organically or at least using more natural farming methods. Farmers in other parts of the world should not adopt the intensive farming practices of North America or Europe, says Ken Warren, a spokesman with The Land Institute, based in the central U.S. state of Kansas.

"It's an unsustainable system that relies heavily on chemical fertilizers... to keep yields high and produces 'hollow food'," Warren told *Tierramérica*. "Hollow food" contains insufficient nutrition and is suspected in playing a role in the rapid rise in obesity, as people may be eating more in order to get the nutrition they need, he said.

Ken Warren of the U.S. Land Institute said, "Crops take minerals, trace elements and other things from the soil every year. All that modern agriculture puts back into the land are some chemical fertilizers which do not replace all that has been lost," Warren said.

Moreover, herbicides and insecticides kill microorganisms in the soil that play an important role in maintaining soil fertility and helping plants grow.

Pesticide residues in modern agriculture are another cause for concern. A 2003 University of Washington study found that children eating organic fruits and vegetables had concentrations of pesticide six times lower than children eating conventional produce.

Well gentlemen, we hope to discuss the material in the above e-mail with Mr. Borgerson at his earliest convenience. Our research foundation has been recommending that you start serving certified organic food in the four restaurants operated by the provincial government in Regina, our hospitals, our nursing homes, school lunch programs, food banks, pregnant women, new mothers and university students. I hope you recognize that Canada has 12.8 per cent of its population who are chemically sensitive. If you clean up our environment and serve organic food, thousands of people will move here instead of going to oil-polluted Alberta. I don't think that you are prepared to recognize that Medicare is in a financial crisis and dollars won't solve the crisis, only a healthy diet of certified organic food will.

Elmer Laird, President, Back To The Farm, Research Foundation



May 10, 2004 Davidson Leader

### **Province needs to legislate food quality standards**

Open letter to Premier Lorne Calvert; Health Minister John Nilson; and Dr. Ross Finlater, Chief Medical Health Officer, all of the province of Saskatchewan.

Re: 1. The province should legislate food quality standards. 2. The province should recognize the nutritional value of certified organic food. 3. The province should start serving certified organic food in government universities, hospitals, nursing homes, restaurants, school lunch and food bank programs immediately. 4. When are you going to start a research program to find out if the nutrition in the soil and sea is getting to the consumer's table?

Perhaps, Mr. Nilson, you remember our recent conversation in the restaurant of the Saskatchewan legislature on April 23. I went to Regina to support the Beyond Factory Farming organization's presentation to Agriculture Minister Mark Wartman, Environment Minister David Forbes and Saskatchewan Water Minister Peter Prebble. We met at the Saskatchewan Legislature prior to the meeting for lunch. I was at the lunch counter looking for the organic section when you walked in. I asked you where the organic section was and you said, "There isn't one." I was surprised and said so. You said that you ate organic food sometimes, but you didn't explain why there wasn't an organic section. I was surprised because they have been serving certified organic food in the five restaurants in the House of Commons for at least two years. The chef told me over a year ago, "We would use more certified organic food if it was available." Obviously, the chemical lobby has more control of the provincial government than the federal government.

I went on a tour of Cuba in February 2003. German scientist and researcher Dr. Fritz Balzer was on the tour and in an hour and a half lecture said and demonstrated that "organic food is more nutritious than chemically raised food."

An article in the March 25, 2004 Winnipeg Free Press, entitled Entire Countries Losing Brain Power, by Chris Hawley with a date line United Nations said: The brain power of entire countries has diminished because of a shortage of the right vitamins, and slipping nutrients into people's food seems to be the only solution, a new UN survey says.

To fight the problem, the United Nations is prescribing a whole pantry of artificially fortified foods: soy sauce laced with zinc, "super salt" spiked with iron, cooking oil fortified with Vitamin A.

Deficiencies in these vitamins are having alarming effects in developing countries, even ones where people generally have enough to eat, said the study released yesterday.

A lack of iron lowers children's IQs by an average five to seven points, the report said. A deficiency in iodine cuts it 13 more points, said Venkatesh Mannar, president of the Micronutrient Initiative, which produced the report along with the United Nations Children's Fund. Birth defects increase when mothers don't get enough folic acid, and a shortage of Vitamin A makes children 25 to 30 per cent more likely to die of disease.

“So ubiquitous is vitamin and mineral deficiency that it debilitates in some significant degree the energies, intellects, and economic prospects of nations,” the study said.

It looked at 80 developing countries representing some 80 per cent of the world’s population. It found:

- Iodine deficiency has lowered the intellectual capacity of almost all of the countries by as much as 10 to 15 percentage points. It causes 18 million children a year to be born mentally impaired.

- Iron deficiency in adults is so wide-spread that it lowers the productivity of work forces, cutting the Gross Domestic Product in the worst- affected countries by two per cent.

- Deficiencies in folic acid, a nutrient needed for tissue growth, especially in pregnant women, causes approximately 200,000 severe birth defects every year in the 80 countries.

- About 40 per cent of the developing world’s people suffer from iron deficiency, 15 percent lack adequate iodine and as many as 40 per cent do not get enough Vitamin A. In most western countries, governments have fought the problem with additives: iodine is sprayed onto salt before packaging, vitamin A is added to milk and margarine, and flour is enriched with niacin, iron and folic acid.

But that doesn’t work in countries where governments are weak, food is not processed in big mills and diets are based on a single starchy staple like rice or corn. Other health experts said the UN findings echoed other studies showing the link between intelligence and nutrition.

Furthermore, things are getting worse in some countries, the report said. The percentage of salt that is iodized has slipped to 25 per cent in some Central Asian countries and to 50 per cent in India, the country with the largest number of iodine deficient people, the report said:

Getting vitamins to people other ways just doesn’t work, researchers said. In the United States, most people ignored government pleas to take more folic acid, a nutrient found in nuts, until the government started putting it in flour in 1998. The result: cases of spina bifida and anencephaly, two serious birth defects, dropped by at least 20 per cent. “It becomes an issue of compliance. If people have to eat a vitamin pill everyday, a lot of them won’t do it,” Mannar said.

The report urges countries to step up enrichment in foods that people don’t make themselves: things like soy sauce, cooking oil or margarine. It also endorses a new kind of salt fortified with iron in “microcapsules.”

But the most disturbing gap between countries with good and poor nutrition is in intelligence, said Cutberto Garza, a Cornell University professor who also leads the nutrition program at United Nations University.

Well, gentlemen, the study was carried out in 80 developing countries. I think the time is long-overdue to either ask the United Nations to do a study here, or do it yourself to find out if the nutrition in Saskatchewan soils is getting to consumers’ tables. If we have good nutrition and the fact is publicized, Saskatchewan will till up with people so fast it will make your head swim. If it isn’t, take steps to correct it.

Hippocrates, the father of medicine said, “Let your food be your medicine, and your medicine be your food.” If we have nutritious food, we have a good foundation for our Medicare system, if we don’t, we better start looking or it will go bankrupt.

Elmer Laird, president  
Back To The Farm  
Research Foundation

July 19, 1999 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:

Mr. John Harvard, MP chairman of the 16 member "Fact Finding" committee of Liberal MPs and senators touring Saskatchewan July 5 -7, 1999.

Dear Mr. Harvard:

The use of toxic agricultural chemicals are at the root of the farm crisis. They are polluting our water, food and air at an increasingly alarming rate. Consumers are very aware of "food pollution", in fact everyone is except federal and provincial politicians, chemical farmers and advertising agency executives. Consumers are rapidly developing a resistance to buying polluted foods. Last spring, CBC Radio journalist Rosalie Weloski reported that net farm income in 1998 averaged about \$1,000 per farm in Saskatchewan. The forecast is for a lower income in 1999. Over the years, both weeds and insects have built up a resistance to agriculture chemicals. The result is more chemicals are being used on the same acreage of land which results in higher farm costs, more food and water pollution and lower prices.

In addition to using toxic agricultural chemicals, we have plunged into growing genetically engineered crops that consumers around the world are rejecting. They are being promoted by transnational corporations to gain control of agriculture.

*Acres, U.S.A* is a very reputable monthly farm paper that provides information to certified organic farmers and farmers that want to reduce chemical inputs. Following is an article from the July 1999 edition that will have special significance to the consuming public. The article is entitled, *Are Fruits and Vegetables Safe?*

A recent report from Consumer Reports reveals unsafe levels of pesticide residues on certain fresh fruits and vegetables, including many that are grown in the United States. The produce was scored based on how many samples contained pesticides, the average amount and the toxicity of particular pesticides found. A score over 100 is cause for concern.

Here are the worst:

Type of produce	Score
Peaches, domestic	4,848
Peaches, from Chile	471
Winter squash, domestic	1,706
Apples, domestic	550
Pears, domestic	435
Pears, from Mexico	415
Spinach, domestic	349
Spinach, from Mexico	256
Grapes, domestic	228
Grapes, from Chile	339
Celery, domestic	255
Green beans, domestic	222

Surprisingly, bananas, which used to be heavily dosed with pesticides, scored only 4. The majority of residue found was of the insecticide methyl parathion. The test data is from USDA testing, with foods prepared as they would be at home (bananas and oranges peeled, etc.). Each sample was a composite of about 5 pounds of produce. The results are especially important for children, who are smaller and more sensitive to pesticides than adults. Pesticides could

contribute to learning disorders in children. Also, in February the Environmental Protection Agency sent copies of a new brochure to U.S. government stores. Titled Pesticides and Food: What You and Your Family Need to Know, the colorful publication, which took EPA three years to write, warns that children are more vulnerable to pesticides and that farmers may at times such as impending crop failure, use pesticide amounts above safety standards. If that happens, the EPA will "work with grocery stores to inform you of such pesticides, foods that might contain them and equally nutritious alternatives." The brochure, which groceries have been asked to display in their produce sections, states that the EPA has adopted stricter pesticide standards.

In another article in the same paper entitled, *Australia Benefits from Non-Genetically Engineered Canola*, Graham Lawrence, manager of the New South Wales Grain Board who is quoted in the article said "Australia will be shipping 350,000 - 400,000 tons of non-genetically-engineered canola to Europe this year. Europe has rejected Canadian and American genetically engineered canola so the Australians are taking advantage of the European market."

Canadians and Americans have forgotten that one of the oldest laws of commerce is that you must supply a product the consumer wants then there is a chance for profit. The consumer is rejecting chemically polluted and genetically engineered food. Certified organic farmers are enjoying good prices for their products and the organic markets in both the U.S. and Canada are increasing 20 per cent per year. I sincerely hope the next time your committee comes to Davidson they stop to talk to farmers as well as touring elevators. The elevator will not provide information to resolve the farm crisis. We might.

Elmer Laird, president,  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

June 21, 1999 Davidson Leader

Open letter to: Saskatchewan Health Minister Pat Atkinson

Re: The customer's right to know what is in the food they eat.

Our water and food supply is polluted with toxic chemical residues. Brian Emmett, Environmental Commissioner who works out of the office of the Auditor General of Canada says, "budget cuts and infighting have paralyzed the federal effort to manage pesticides and other toxic chemicals". There is no systematic monitoring of pesticide residues in Canadian food and the government doesn't collect data on the many toxic substances released into the environment.

Transnational corporations are introducing Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) into the food chain. They are refusing to label the new products as genetically engineered products. They have the support of federal agriculture - not to label. For example, last winter I asked Greg Brown, manager of the Davidson Co-operative, if the canola oil on the shelves of their grocery store was genetically engineered. He said that he would ask the "food man" from the Federated Co-operatives when he came around. A couple of weeks later Brown reported that the "food man" was unable to find out. I was provided with a toll-free number to phone for that information. When I phoned all I got was a taped message telling me what a good product the canola oil is. The Davidson Co-op carries about five different kinds of peanut butter. Only one contains peanut oil, all the rest contain vegetable oil. There is no way of finding out if the vegetable oil is a genetically altered oil. Margarine is also made from vegetable oil.

I asked the Canadian Human Rights Commission if I had a right to know what is in my food. They have a list of 11 different items that the commission will investigate and rule on, but "what's in the food" isn't one of them. I have never heard of anyone challenging food quality under The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It is possible to challenge federal government policy through the Federal Court of Canada, but legal fees would be astronomical. The only possible action a citizen can take is political action. There is an election coming in this province within the next year and I am writing to ask you to include in your election platform that you support a citizens right to know what is in the food supply. I would also suggest that your department take every action possible to inform citizens about toxic chemicals and genetically engineered products in their food supply.

Other actions:

1. Many farmers in Saskatchewan use the services of the Provincial Laboratory in Regina to get their dam, dugout or well water tested to find out if it is safe to use. The provincial laboratory does not test for pesticides and furthermore it doesn't tell Saskatchewan citizens that it doesn't test for pesticides. Some people with families say "Look, my water test shows that our dugout water is fit for infant feeding." The facts are it has never been tested for pesticides.

2. The provincial government used to contract with the Saskatchewan Research Council to test the water supplies of small communities for pesticides twice a year. Your

government discontinued this testing program about five years ago as an economic measure.

3. Taxpayers have paid for many gas-liquid chromatographs and mass- spectrometers for research and university use. Some should be moved to rural trading centres so if anyone is concerned about the safety of their food and water, they could get it tested. In Part 1 of my letter I said that we are right back to the conditions I grew up in in the 1930s where mother and grandmother made the decisions about the safety of their food and water because government health and environmental protection has failed. Unfortunately in this technological age, mother and grandmother do not have the information about the safety of our food and water supply. I think you as minister can go a long way to help them find the information that is necessary to make decisions about the safety of our food and water. If you don't, health care costs will continue to soar. We would welcome a meeting to pursue possible action that can be taken to inform mothers and grandmothers about food and water safety.

Elmer Laird, president  
Back To The Farm Research Foundation

## CANCER

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October 2002 *alive* #240

### Rising Cancer Rates

A recent article in the *Regina Leader Post* reported a statement made by Shiv Chopra, one of a group of four worried Health Canada scientists. He said the group had been writing to politicians for five years complaining about the condition of Canada's food supply without any response, and that Health Canada is pressuring its staff to approve unsafe drugs.

Here in Saskatchewan, we're equally concerned about Canada's food supply and the effects of chemical agriculture. We were fortunate to have award-winning journalist Liane Casten of Chicago as a guest speaker in Davidson on July 5th. She is author of the book *Breast Cancer, Poisons, Profits and Prevention* (Common Courage Press, 1996), which documents the connection between breast cancer, chlorinated chemicals and the environment.

"PCBs, DDT, dioxin and most chlorine-based chemicals—along with nuclear radiation—cause 70 per cent of all breast cancer in women and yes, now in men," she said. "This includes both nuclear power plant emissions and extensive medical diagnostic radiation procedures. There is a growing debate about the value of mammograms as a diagnostic tool especially when there are safer diagnostic alternatives. However, with the media and the cancer establishment pressing for mammograms, precious little time is placed on prevention."

Casten continued, "Considering the fact the whole country (rural and urban) uses 2,4-D in agriculture, which contains trace levels of dioxin, this is a recipe for disaster. Dioxin is a known human carcinogen and like chlorinated compounds, tends to accumulate in the environment and in animal and human body fat. Therefore, parts per trillion grows to part per billion, and parts per billion grows to parts per million, and parts per million in the body spells trouble!"

Saskatchewan is definitely feeling the effects of chemical agriculture. Our spraying season lasts seven months, and we have the highest rates of breast and cervical cancer in Canada. Our province has the second highest prostate cancer rate. Dr. Allan Cessna of the National Hydrology Water Research Centre in Saskatoon reported that all Saskatchewan surface waters and one-third of the wells are polluted with herbicides—some at very high rates. He noted that 24 hours after farmers start spraying pesticides, they begin passing the pesticides through their urine.

Not surprisingly, we also use about one-third of all the pesticides used in Canada—a blind



reliance that has nothing to do with human health and all to do with corporate profit. Pesticides were designed in the First and Second World Wars to destroy people and vegetation. We should have learned a lesson from the Vietnam War. Veterans are still suffering and dying from exposure to Agent Orange, a combination of 2,4-D and 2,4,5T used in Vietnam as a weapon.

David Suzuki recently reported in "The Nature of Things" on CBC about the devastation of the land in Vietnam, much of which remains unproductive 40 years after the war. Many Vietnamese also remain ill and suffer from birth defects as a result of Agent Orange exposure.

It is unfortunate that both the federal and provincial governments in Canada continue to give strong support and funding to chemical agriculture, biotechnology and the corporations that promote them, while ignoring certified organic farms and farmers.

Is this so surprising? In the last federal election, Canadians elected 301 federal members of Parliament, who go to Ottawa to be bombarded by 3,300 registered lobbyists, many of whom work for chemical and biotech companies.

Casten concluded, "Our most famous American president, Abraham Lincoln, when describing the role of government said, 'Government must be of the people, for the people and by the people.'"

Well, to Canada's politicians, I ask: are you a government run by corporations or by the people?

*After 55 years of farming, Elmer Laird is now retired and is president of the Back to the Farm Research Foundation and manager of the foundation's organic research and demonstration farm in Davidson, Sask.*

April 2002 *alive* #234**Pesticides in our Environment**

My longtime friend Dr. Carl Clark of Regina often said, "Cancer is the worst word in the English language." A World War II air force veteran, he trained as an osteopath in Chicago in the 1930s when the notorious gangster Al Capone ran Chicago. Dr Clark spent the war years adjusting the backs of service personnel at Christie Street Hospital in Toronto, and unfortunately, he died of cancer 25 years ago at the age of 70.

Since Dr Clark died, we have moved into the era of globalization. The power of the transnational corporation is getting stronger, and the rights of the individual are diminishing. Today, there is a war going on between certified organic farmers, environmentalists, people with health concerns and transnational companies over GMOs, pesticides and control of agriculture and the food supply.

But I still think cancer is the worst word in the English language.

Saskatchewan has the highest rate of breast and cervical cancers and the second highest prostate cancer rate in Canada. Cancer is certainly one of our few major growth industries in Saskatchewan.

The sale of agricultural pesticides is another. We in Saskatchewan use one-third of the pesticides used in Canada and I am completely convinced that pesticides cause cancer. Fortunately for me as a farmer, I enjoy free speech. I can say what I believe without persecution and it doesn't affect the price of my products. Unfortunately, very few people listen because I don't have a PhD. I never passed Grade 9 French, but I've had a lot of experience in the school of life.

I am going to introduce a term here that is rarely used: "academic fine tuning." It has been my experience that academics listen to other academics before they listen to farmers or other citizens. In view of the fact that most of the provincial NDP cabinet ministers are academics, they ignore my opinion and the opinion of other citizens. They wait for PhDs to tell them that pesticides cause cancer. So when are the PhDs going to speak out?

**Research Funding**

I think the directors and administrators of the transnational drug and chemical companies of today have graduated from the Al Capone school of population control. Capone had most of the Chicago police force on his payroll and was indeed an expert gangster.

Similarly, transnationals control the voice of the medical and agricultural communities here in a perfectly legal way. The government provides 50 per cent of research grants to universities. Transnational drug and chemical companies provide the other 50 per cent. Need I say more?

Organic farmers do not have enough money to provide the 50 per cent for organic research, so practically nothing is spent on organic research. Unfortunately, both taxpayers and organic farmers are contributing to the government's 50 per cent and not getting what they want.

### **Bodily Effects**

Fortunately, some academics are speaking out about the cancer-pesticide connection. In the December 2001 edition of *Acres USA*, Arden B. Andersen, DO, PhD, said, "What the [pesticide] industry and the puppet government agencies are not telling the American public is that all independent scientific studies on genetically modified foods show that these foods suppress the immune system and increase cancer rates."

Liane Casten, author of *Breast Cancer: Poison, Profits and Prevention*, writes, "I am totally and completely aware of and convinced of the relationship between pesticides and cancer. A good portion of the pesticides used today are carcinogenic. All 2,4-D contains small amounts of dioxin."

Casten makes the following points: 1) Dioxin does not biodegrade. 2) It stores in the body fat of both humans and animals. 3) Dioxin is a known human carcinogen. 4) Dioxin is capable of breaking down the immune system. 5) It is capable of causing neurological responses. 6) It will affect the weakest member of your vital organs.

Casten goes on to write, "As long as the system puts profits ahead of public health there will be no change in the cancer rate. Money defines research and money defines distribution of chemicals and money defines ignorance of the pesticide-cancer connection."

Farmers in Saskatchewan have used 2,4-D since 1948 and are still using it.

### **Pesticide Testing**

Here in Davidson, with a population of 1,150 serving an agricultural community of another 2,000, we had four cases of infant cancer diagnosed in the year prior to June 2001. We asked the provincial minister of health to investigate in July 2001. He set up a cancer cluster committee, but because all the infants had different kinds of cancer, the investigation stopped.

Shortly thereafter, our research foundation tested the water supplies for pesticides. We found that there are low levels of pesticides in the water. However, since there are no national standards for safe pesticide levels-just meaningless guidelines-our results are equally ambiguous.

We also know that our local water contains high levels of trihalomethanes, which are cancer-causing and are created by chlorine mixing with organic material in the water. In July 2001, the town received a report from the department of health stating that Davidson

is one of 119 communities out of 520 in Saskatchewan that has excessively high levels of trihalomethanes.

Canadian citizens are spending billions of dollars on cancer research but practically nothing on prevention. We have attempted to get the provincial government involved in testing our air and food for pesticides, but so far, no action has been taken. It is obvious citizens will have to take action to clean up our environment since governments are not going to.

July 15, 2002 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:  
Prime Minister Jean Chrétien  
Health Minister Lyle VanClief  
Mr. Larry Spencer, M.P.

Re: Cancer and the environment

Recent press reports indicate that some of the staff at the Canadian Health Protection Agency, Department of Health have been attempting to alert national political leaders from the prime minister down, about their concerns about the quality of the Canadian food supply. Here in Saskatchewan, the rate of breast and cervical cancer is the highest in Canada and prostate cancer is the second highest. We also use about one third of the pesticides used in Canada. Dr. Allan Cessna of the National Hydrology Water Research Centre, Saskatoon reports that all Saskatchewan surface waters and a third of the wells in Saskatchewan are polluted with herbicides, some at very high rates. He reports that 24 hours after a farmer starts spraying pesticides, he starts passing them in his urine.

We were fortunate to have award winning journalist, Liane Casten of Chicago as a guest speaker at the Parish Hall in Davidson on July 5, 2002.

She is the author of the book *Breast Cancer: Poisons, Profits and Prevention*. Her book gives us the documented evidence of the connection between breast cancer and the environment. The book was published in 1996 with explicit evidence providing the connection between chlorinated chemicals, the environment and breast cancer. She said "at this point after the publication of my book, six years later the documentary evidence is even stronger." She went on to say "PCBs, D.D.T. and dioxin and most chlorine based chemicals are directly connected. Along with nuclear radiation these pollutants form the 70 per cent of all breast cancer in women and yes, now in men. In terms of nuclear radiation this includes both nuclear power plant emissions and extensive medical diagnostic radiation procedures.

There is a growing debate about the value of mammograms as a diagnostic tool especially when there are safer diagnostic alternatives. However with the media and the cancer establishment pressing for mammograms (there is big money involved) precious little time is placed on prevention."

Casten continued "considering the fact the whole country is addicted to 2,4-D, which contains trace levels of dioxin, this is a recipe for disaster. Dioxin is a known human carcinogen and like the above mentioned chlorinated compounds, tends to be bioaccumulated in the environment especially in animal and human body fat. Therefore parts per trillion grows to parts per billion, and parts per billion grows to parts per million and parts per billion in the body spells real trouble."

Here in rural Saskatchewan where spraying season lasts seven months a year and we spray a third of the pesticides used in Canada, the blind continued reliance of pesticides has nothing to do with human health and all to do with corporate profit. Pesticides were designed in World Wars I and II to destroy people and vegetation. We should have learned a lesson from the Vietnam War. Even American war veterans are

still suffering and dying from exposure to agent orange, that was used in Vietnam, was a combination of 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T. David Suzuki reported in the C.B.C. Program *The Nature of Things* about the devastation of the land in Vietnam that remains unproductive 40 years after the war. Many fields where crops grew before the war are still completely unproductive. It is also true that many Vietnamese are still ill, unproductive and often birth defective, as a result of their exposure to Agent Orange and the dioxin contaminant.

Unfortunately, here in Canada both the federal and provincial governments continue to give strong support to chemical agricultural and the corporations that promote it. They also continue to ignore certified organic farms, and farmers, and spend their money supporting chemical research and the promotion of GMOs.

Casten concluded, "Our most famous president, Abraham Lincoln, when he described the role of government, said "Government must be of the people, for the people and by the people."

Well, gentlemen - are you a government run by the corporations or by the people?

Elmer Laird, President  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

January 16, 1995 Davidson Leader

Journalist Marti Mussell in an article entitled "Cancer: The Environmental Links" that appeared in the Oct./Nov. edition of "Earthkeeper" reported on a conference sponsored by Greenpeace and The Women's Environmental Network that was held in Austin Texas in March 1994. She said "Most breast cancers are preventable." That was the consensus of a scientist who met with 36 women from Canada, US and Mexico. At the Conference she reported, "Eighty percent of cancers are caused by environmental factors. Cancer comes from the air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink, and the work we do. And these factors can be controlled.

In 1950, the rate of cancer was one in ten. It is now one in three. By the year 2000 cancer is expected to become the primary cause of death.

In 1940, only one in 20 women developed breast cancer, and the rate was decreasing.

After the Second World War, in the fifties and sixties, the US military carried out extensive nuclear testing. It was also at this time, through the military industry, that some of the pesticides such as Agent Orange and DDT began to increase in use.

Author Rachel Carson was the first person in North America to write about the health hazards of the massive use of pesticides. In her book entitled, "Silent Spring" published in 1963 (34 years ago) she said in part - "These chemicals remain in the environment for decades and are stored in the fatty tissue of humans," Carson wrote. "Women have 30% more body fat than men, and their breasts, consisting mainly of fatty tissue, are prime storehouses for deadly toxins." Mussell went on to say, "We did not need her warning. Now the chlorine production, a multi-billion dollar industry, has increased to over 40 million tons annually. And now, breast cancer touches one in nine women.

In industry, chlorine is combined with petrochemicals to make organochlorines. Organochlorines are then manufactured into pesticides, solvents, industrial bleaches used in paper production, and PVC plastics. Organochlorines and their by-products have been linked to immune deficiency diseases, birth defects, infertility and cancer. Some organochlorines mimic the female hormone estrogen. Studies have shown that women with high levels of DDT and DDE have a significantly increased chance of getting breast cancer.

Dr. Rosalie Bertell, Winnipeg, who is a Research Scientist and a Sister in the Order of The Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart who attended the conference talked about the new view of cancer as an environmentalist disease. She said, "There is no divide between our bodies and the environment. We live in a recycling earth." Mussel said "In light of such comments the participants, a number of whom were breast cancer survivors, raised several questions. With over a trillion dollars spent on cancer research since 1971 when the war on cancer was declared, why has prevention been overlooked? Why have we ignored the devastating effects on our health of the industrial uses of chlorine? Why has the cancer effort been focusing on developing even more toxic drugs like tamoxifen, instead of looking into finding ways to strengthen our natural immune systems?

The answers to these questions may explain why breast cancer treatment has not seen any real improvement in success rate since the 1950's. Breast cancer research shows a shocking return on investment".

Thirty four years ago Rachel Carson in her book *Silent Spring* said, “We shall have no relief from this poisoning of the environment until our officials have the courage and integrity to declare that the public welfare is more important than dollars and to enforce this view.”

Journalist Mussell concluded, “It is not just the responsibility of public officials, but of each and every one of us, to make personal choices in our every day lives that reflect a recycling earth.

What are we going to do about the breast cancer epidemic? Farmers are the main users of pesticides, herbicides and fungicides. Chemical agriculture is obsolete, both weeds and pest have built up a resistance, farmers are going broke and chemical companies are doing very well. Are we ready to make a change?

Perhaps the wrong person in the family has been doing the worrying. In the main woman are worrying about their spouses and their children’s exposure to toxic chemicals, perhaps it is time to change. I would suggest to the farm operators who are usually men that before they place their order for chemicals this spring they think about the relationship of the toxic chemicals they are going to use to the health of their spouse.

Look you guys, it is the other sex, it is your mother, your wives, and your daughters, it is the women of this world who have brought us into the world in most instances has fed us this far, perhaps it is time for you to do something to make sure they are around to look after you in your old age. The question this time is for the girls - Will they do it?



## REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

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May 2000 *alive* #211

### **Pesticides and Reproductive Health**

Non-organic farmers and their partners may want to abstain from sex during the seven-month-long spraying season every year. Urban pesticides applicators, year-round chemical-plant workers and distributors are also advised to consider the relationship between chemical exposure, sexual activity and health. Press reports indicate that golf courses use four times as many toxic pesticides per acre as the average farm, so golf course attendants and ardent golfers should pay attention as well.

*Farm Family Health* is published by Health Canada. An article in the fall 1999 edition entitled *Herbicide Residues Found in Semen* said, "Trace levels of 2,4-Dichlorophenoxyacetic acid (2,4-D) were detected in both urine and semen samples collected from pesticide applicators in Ontario in a recent Health Canada study."

The Pesticide Exposure Assessment Pilot Study was headed by Tye Arbuckle of the Bureau of Reproductive and Child Health at Health Canada. It may be the first study to make some initial estimates of exposure and comparisons between pesticide levels in semen and urine.

The Health Canada study tested urine samples taken before pesticide application as well as 24 and 48 hours afterwards. They also looked at single semen samples collected within 48 hours of application from 97 Ontario farmers. These farmers had recently used herbicides containing 2,4-D and MCPA on their farms. Approximately half of the semen samples had detectable levels of 2,4-D, ranging from zero to 650 parts per million.

The link between pesticides and reproductive health isn't new. Several recent studies have explored the effects of exposure to pesticides on pregnancy outcomes (*Farm Family Weekly*, spring 1999). While none is conclusive, some studies suggested that paternal pesticide exposures may affect reproductive health and pregnancy outcome as much as maternal exposure. This may occur because chemicals can cause genetic damage to the sperm or hormonal imbalances.

"Looking at the consequences ... of a father's exposure to toxic agents is an area of growing interest," reports Arbuckle. "Up to this point, most studies have concentrated on maternal exposures.

"Farmers and custom applicators will begin to void pesticide residues through their urine within 24 hours of beginning to spray," says Dr Allan Cessna of the National Hydrological Centre in Saskatoon. "The exposure to the product (pesticides) is 98 per

cent dermal (skin) and mainly comes through the hands. Even people not involved in spraying will show levels of exposure."

"Herbicides are present in every water supply in western Canada," Cessna continues. "Some dugouts considered by 15,000 Saskatchewan families to be drinkable contain levels of pesticides as much as 1,000 times more detectable than European water supplies." Cessna adds he has yet to analyze water from a farm dugout that didn't contain residues.

The provincial laboratory operated by the Saskatchewan Department of Health tests samples of water from farm wells. They do not test the samples for pesticides. Frequently I have heard farmers and their wives say, "My water test came back and it's so good it's fit for feeding to infants!" However, it was not tested for pesticides. And the provincial lab does not inform farmers that their water samples have not been tested for chemical pesticides!

The provincial government used to provide funds to the Saskatchewan Research Council to test the water supplies of small Saskatchewan communities for pesticides. When the Romanow NDP government was elected in 1991 the research grant to test small town water supplies was discontinued.

We must insist on proper testing of our water and support the shift to organic farming practice. Among many other reasons, our reproductive health depends on it.

May 1, 2000 Davidson Leader

Federal Health Minister Allan Rock, provincial Health Minister Pat Atkinson and other endangered species on this planet.

RE: Safe sex for reproduction and recreation

We respectfully request that in the interest of safe sex and health protection your departments of health advise women whose sex partners are chemical farmers that spray toxic pesticides, aerial or ground pesticide applicators, golf course attendants, ardent golfers, urban pesticide applicators and year round chemical plant workers and distributors should find new sex partners or abstain from sex during the seven month long spraying season every year. (Press reports indicate golf courses use four times as many toxic pesticides per acre as the average farm).

An article in the Feb. 26, 1998 edition of *The Western Producer* entitled Ag chemicals in west's water by Michael Raine quotes Dr. Allan Cessna of the National Hydrological Centre in Saskatoon as follows: "Farmers and custom applicators will begin to void pesticide residues through their urine within 24 hours of beginning to spray. The exposure to the product (pesticides) is 98 per cent dermal (skin) and mainly comes through the hands. For people not even involved in spraying, they too will show levels of exposure."

Cessna said, "Herbicides are present in every water supply in Western Canada. Some dugouts, considered to have drinkable water by 15,000 Saskatchewan farm families, contain levels of pesticides as much as 1,000 times more detectable than European water supplies. I have yet to analyze water from a farm dugout 'that didn't contain residues...residues can be found in ground (wells) as well. Even if a conservative 10 per cent of pesticides fail to reach their targets and become part of the environment, either in whole or in their degraded parts, the result is one million kilograms of product deposited elsewhere in the environment."

The provincial laboratory, operated by the Saskatchewan Department of Health, tests samples of water taken by farmers from farm dugouts or farm wells. They do not test the samples for pesticides. Frequently, I have heard farmers and their wives say, "My water test came back and it is fit for infant feeding." However, it was not tested for pesticides and the provincial lab does not inform farmers that their samples are not tested for pesticides.

The provincial government used to provide funds to the Saskatchewan Research Council to test the water supplies of small Saskatchewan communities for pesticides. The Romanow NDP government, when they were elected in 1991, discontinued the grant to test small town water supplies. They are no longer tested for pesticides.

*Farm Family Health* is published by Health Canada. An article in the fall 1999 edition entitled Herbicide Residues Found in Semen said, "Trace levels of 2,4-Dichlorophenoxyacetic Acid (2,4- D) were detected in both urine and semen samples collected from pesticide applicators in Ontario in a recent Health Canada study. "The Pesticide Exposure Assessment Pilot Study also found some similarities between the levels of 2,4-D in the semen samples and those found in urine samples taken 48 hours after pesticide application. Given the importance of semen as a potential carrier of chemicals posing reproductive hazards, it is crucial to understand the relationship between pesticide-handling practices, the presence and levels of pesticide residues in semen and the risk of adverse reproductive outcomes.

"This study, headed by Tye Arbuckle, of the Bureau of Reproductive and Child Health at Health Canada, is the first to make some initial estimates of exposure and comparisons between pesticide levels in semen and urine.

"The Health Canada study tested urine samples taken prior to pesticide application, as well as 24 and 48 hours afterwards, and a single semen collected within 48 hours of application from 97 Ontario farmers. These farmers had recently used herbicides containing 2,4-D and MCPA on their farms. Approximately half of the semen samples had detectable levels of 2,4-D ranging from 0 to 650 parts per million.

"Several recent studies have explored the effects of exposure to pesticides on pregnancy outcomes (see Farm Family Health, spring 1999). While none are conclusive, some studies suggested that paternal pesticide exposures may affect reproductive health and pregnancy outcome as much as maternal exposure and that this may occur because of direct affects on sperm production, causing genetic damage to the sperm or causing hormonal imbalances.

"Looking at the consequences to pregnancy of a father's exposure to toxic agents is an area of growing interest," reports Arbuckle. "Up to this point, most studies have concentrated on maternal exposures."

Four or five years ago the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, did a study on male sperm count in industrialized nations. In the population not directly exposed to pesticides it was discovered the count had dropped to 50 per cent as a result of environmental pollution.

Recent press reports indicate there are 49 fertility clinics in Canada. As sperm counts continue to drop, it appears that it won't be very long before sex is only a form of recreation. If we don't start cleaning up our environment, reproduction will very likely take place by "cloning". Man is an endangered species, but few people recognize it. In the past you have warned citizens about venereal disease, HIV and AIDS. It is time you looked seriously at protecting man's ability and desire to reproduce safely. It's time you take action on your own studies.

Elmer Laird, president,  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

July 12, 1993 Davidson Leader

### **Low Sperm Count In Farmers...**

Reproduction of the human species has obviously become a problem in the last few years because we have heard more about fertilization clinics, artificial insemination techniques for both humans and animals. Since we have realized that Aids is a fatal disease and has reached epidemic proportions, we have been bombarded with information about "Safe Sex".

However, we rarely see any information about "Safe Reproduction" with the exception of the effects of liquor and tobacco on the fetus. Nothing is said about environmental hazards to avoid, if you hope to conceive and produce normal, strong, healthy children.

In the March 22, 1993 edition of the Davidson Leader, I wrote a column based on the report of the Department of Reproduction and Development of the University of Copenhagen Denmark. The report said that after fifty years of pollution of the environment (1940-1990), male sperm count had dropped 50%. The Copenhagen study was a summary of world literature and was supported by two United States, two German and one World Health organization studies.

I wrote a similar article for the publication "Action Alive", a Health Food publication. In both articles I concluded that if we continue on at the present rate of pollution, that in something less than fifty years, man will no longer be able to reproduce.

Federal Bureaucrats don't like positive black and white statements, they like middle of the road, grey statements. Mr. Ken R. Foster, Assistant Deputy Minister Of Federal Health and Welfare, in a letter to Ms. Rhody Lake, Editor of Action Alive, said he thought my analysis wasn't really valid but he went on to say, "there is, however, evidence showing that human sperm counts do decline in work settings involving high levels of contaminants, for example, farmers using pesticides. For farmers, sperm counts were found to decline during the summer months and return to normal during the winter". Journalist Michael Raine in an article entitled ". . . And Women Are Susceptible As Well" reports on a study on Cancer, by Helen McDuffie at the Centre for Agricultural Medicine, University of Saskatoon. The article first appeared in the Western Producer and was reprinted in Sustainable Farming. Ms. McDuffie said, "the study first released in Spring of 1992, indicates the longer women live on the farm the more risk they have."

She said "the types of cancers we are encountering are very rare in the general population and finding them in a select group of people is pretty convincing. Something is affecting women who live their whole lives on the farm." McDuffie said, "we found that the risk of developing these cancers decreased with time away from the farm." She went on to say, "the risk increased in women who experienced the following factors; water supplies provided by shallow wells, storing the contaminated clothing in the home, washing the contaminated clothing with their regular laundry, entering fields shortly after spraying and mixing of pesticides in dairy barns and enclosed spaces."

Unfortunately, all research on the hazards of chemicals (agricultural or others) is conducted one chemical at a time. No one is doing research on the hazards of the combination of chemicals that are available today on people, domestic animals, wildlife and the environment. The Department of Reproduction and Development at the

University of Copenhagen is probably coming as close as we will ever get to achieving that goal.

They are measuring the hazards of pollution on the reproduction and development ability of the human species. Governments continue to evaluate one agricultural chemical at a time and dither about with the decision of whether to ban it or release it. We need a more positive method to evaluate the hazards of chemicals.

We now know that all parents and grandparents want strong healthy children and grandchildren. I think the following question should be put directly to all the promoters of agriculture chemicals. If you had a daughter of eligible age, would you want her to marry a chemical farmer, and if she did, would you want her to sleep and have sex with him during the seven month spraying season we have in Saskatchewan?

February 13, 1995 Davidson Leader

Today's press reports indicate that Dr. Gerrard said many organizations and educational institutions are promoting safe sex. Understandably, they are concerned about the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, especially AIDS. They are also extremely worried about teenage pregnancies. However, no one seems concerned about the requirements for safe reproduction which will continue accidentally or deliberately as long as we can have life on this planet.

To seek information on this topic I went to Dr. Gerrard, who is concerned with the impact of our environment on health. I have met Dr. Gerrard on many occasions during the past 20 years, and have discussed environment health related problems with him. I have always been impressed with his opinions. Dr. Gerrard has had a very interesting medical career. He graduated from Oxford University in 1941, served an internship in an Emergency Hospital near Birmingham, England, established in World War II. He joined the British Royal Army Medical Corps in 1942, serving in England, North Africa, Italy and Palestine. He was discharged in 1946, trained in paediatrics at the Children's Hospital in Birmingham, was elected to the Staff of the Hospital, and then came to Canada in 1955, to head up the Department of Paediatrics at the University Hospital. He stepped down as Head of the Department in 1970, but continued to practice until 1984, when he retired from his hospital based practice. He continues to practice from his home.

I asked him why he became concerned with the effect of the environment on health, and he said, "In effect that because the allergist in the Department of Paediatrics left and I had to take care of the allergic children. Allergies result from the interaction of the environment and the allergic individual. Cats for example cause wheezing. Soaps, wool and house dust may cause frequent colds and spells of wheezy bronchitis. I quickly realized that it wasn't just cats and dogs and house dust that were causing trouble, but that things that were thought not to be dangerous, cigarette smoke, perfumes, grain dust, pesticides and herbicides, could also cause problems. The environment was all embracing."

Commenting of the effect of the maternal environment on the baby, Dr. Gerrard said, "We think that the fetus, sheltered in the womb, and protected in this way outside influences, was safe, but in the sixties it was suddenly brought home to us, that even what appeared to be an innocent sedative, - vigorously promoted because it was thought to be safe - Thalidomide, could have a devastating effect on the unborn child. Thalidomide, we discovered, if taken during the first three months of the pregnancy, could cause deafness, and interfere with the normal growth of the arms and legs. Many other drugs are now known to interfere with the normal development of the fetus, and generally recommend that mother avoid a host, if not all medications when pregnant and that she does stop smoking and avoids alcohol completely for the first six months of the pregnancy and even during the last three months of the pregnancy she shouldn't drink more than an occasional glass of wine or beer."

He went on to say, "Smoking interferes with the normal nourishment of the baby and leads to it being underweight and scrawny at birth, with the dice loaded against it, and a diminished chance of survival. Alcohol affects the development of the face and more importantly of the brain, leading to the so-called fetal alcohol syndrome. In some sections of society it is probably the commonest cause of mental retardation. Brain

damage due the maternal consumption of alcohol should never be allowed to happen. Hard drugs such as cocaine, heroine, opium and morphine also have a devastating effect of the developing brain, causing permanent damage. None of us should ever take these drugs, unless prescribed by a doctor and no woman should ever take them when pregnant - the safest rule for her when pregnant, is it to avoid all medications, except Tylenol.”

Dr. Gerrard said, “The mother needs to be provided with a good, nutritious diet when pregnant, as she is feeding both herself and her baby. She should be given an adequate supply of calories, vitamins and minerals. Of special importance, studies have recently shown, is folic acid. This is a member of the B vitamins and has been found to protect the fetus from what are called “neural tube defects”, myelomeningocele and hydrocephalus. Myelomeningocele is usually associated with paralysis of the legs and hydrocephalus with some degree of impaired mental development. A small amount of folic acid is enough to protect the baby against these hazards and should be taken by all expectant mothers.” He went on to say, “The birth of the baby should be a happy and exciting experience for everyone and fathers should be encouraged to participate in it. As soon as the cord has been tied the mother should be handed her baby and allowed to cuddle it and if it is awake, put it to the breast for breast milk with very, few exceptions, it is the best milk for human babies. Putting the baby to the breast is the best way to ensure a good supply of breast milk for the baby. Having mother and baby share the same room should be encouraged. There should be follow up visits by the public health nurse when mother and baby go home to make sure all is well.”

Dr. Gerrard concluded, “Most babies and mothers seem to tolerate the modern hospital nursery, but there is one group of babies that may need special attention. These are the babies of allergic parents. Allergies tend to run in families. Allergic babies are usually best brought up in cotton clothes that have not been washed in detergents, should wear cotton diapers and be washed with non scented soaps. Their mothers, if they are breast feeding them, will need wholesome diets but may have to avoid milk, eggs, fish and nuts as these may trigger allergic reactions such as colic, frequent runny noses, ear infections and rashes such as eczema. If the mother needs supplements of iron or calcium, care should be taken - in choosing the supplement, as the baby may resist them.”

There is little doubt that a clean environment provides pure (unpolluted) water and air and an ample supply of certified organic food is essential for safe reproduction. It would appear from Dr. Gerrard’s comments, the responsibility for safe reproduction falls on the mother. However, in the past, men were the protector and the provider of food and shelter for the family. It is to be hoped men of the future will start cleaning up the environment to protect the health of their wives, children, grandchildren and all children of the future. The questions are: 1. Will men in the future take on the role to protect society? 2. Will the new Health Minister, Lorne Calvert include the fundamentals of safe reproduction described by Dr. Gerrard in the new “Wellness” program? 3. Will members of the Midwest Health District Board demonstrate leadership in this program?



## TOXIC CHEMICALS

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June 17, 1996 Davidson Leader

Dr. James Dodsman of the Centre for Agricultural Medicine, Saskatoon, is extremely concerned about the potential hazards for everyone living in the area where pesticides will be used to control Wheat Midge, Bertha Army Worm, Diamondback Moth and Flea Beetle this year. Shown in the picture is a yellow plastic bag that states across the top "Pesticides Applied" in large black letters. In the centre is a "No Trespassing" sign and at the bottom there are three lines to be filled in: 1) Chemical used; 2) Date sprayed; and 3) Date of re-entry to the field. He makes it very clear that no one should go near the newly sprayed field for twenty-four to forty-eight hours. Dr. Dodsman's concern is the fact that organophosphate insecticides contain a cholinesterase inhibitor. Cholinesterase is necessary for the functioning of the central nervous system. The absence of it could cause permanent nerve damage or even death. The plastic signs are designed to fit over a piece of plywood or stiff cardboard that can be nailed to a post at the perimeters of the fields that are sprayed.

The Centre has mailed out 21,000 packages of material to farmers that contain the yellow sign and material on pesticide safety including sprayer operation, emergency procedures, filling the sprayer, use of safety equipment, washing or discarding clothes after spraying (when necessary), showering and personal hygiene. Additional packages of signs have been mailed out to R.M. Offices and Rural Service Centres. The Centre staff are pleased that many aircraft sprayer pilots have telephoned for additional signs. They think this is a good indication the safety program is being accepted.

CBC Radio news interviewed a farmer a few days ago who suffered permanent nerve damage last year because he tried to pick up some hay bales next to a sprayed field where the wind was blowing in his direction. Symptoms go all the way from "flu like" to muscle weakness or actual death.

Unfortunately, the signs are not fluorescent and, even so, if people were down wind from a sprayed field at night they may not be aware of them. For example, if a young couple decided to drive down a quiet country road to discuss or share problems adolescents have, growing up in the global village, they may inadvertently park down wind from a freshly sprayed field. They maybe unfamiliar with the odour of the toxic pesticide or the imminent danger they are in until it is too late. As a second example, sometimes people may decide to avoid a smoky bar and drive out to a quiet spot (hopefully not patrolled by the RCMP) in the country for a drink on a warm summer evening. They may not be aware of the odour of pesticides. School bus drivers should be aware of pesticide spraying along bus routes as young people are more susceptible to toxic residue than older people. If you are living beside a newly sprayed field and the wind changes the only solution would appear to be that you move out of your house for a couple of days. If you are a farmer I don't know what you do about the livestock and poultry.

Spraying for Flea Beetles has already started. The Centre's program is very timely and hopefully it will be completely successful as it looks like it may be a long season of spraying insecticides this year. It is important to realize that everyone in the area is at risk, not only farmers.

Dr. Dodsman says to be prepared for emergencies at all times:

'Keep a supply of clean water on hand at the mixing site and on the sprayer.

If a spill or splash soaks through to the skin, IMMEDIATELY remove contaminated clothing and wash area thoroughly with large amounts of soap and water. If a source of running water is available, continue to flush for 20 minutes.

- If eye contact occurs, IMMEDIATELY flush with large amounts of water for at least 15 minutes.

- If swallowed, follow label directions for immediate action. The formulation of the product can have important implications for the correct first aid action.

'Be aware of the signs and symptoms of poisoning of the product you are using so a problem will be recognized as early as possible. Mild symptoms may rapidly progress to more serious symptoms so do not delay in seeking medical aid. Organophosphorous and carbamate insecticides have antidotal treatments so early medical aid is important.

- Keep emergency numbers posted by the phone.

Dr. Dodsman also says that in case of suspected poisoning take the following steps:

- \* IMMEDIATELY begin first aid procedures taking care to remove the victim from further exposure and to prevent contaminating yourself. If the victim loses consciousness, -ensure that they can breathe properly. Do not leave an unconscious victim unattended. Begin artificial respiration if breathing stops.

- \* CALL TUE POISON CONTROL CENTRE OR PHYSICIAN IMMEDIATELY IN ALL CASES OF SUSPECTED POISONING.

The Poison Control Centre in Regina can be reached at 1-800-667-4545 or in Saskatoon at 1-800-363-7474.

- \* If possible bring a product label which gives the product name and pest control product registration number to emergency personnel.

- \* Transport the victim to medical aid as soon as possible.

- \* NOTE: overexposure to insecticides may cause symptoms that affect the ability of an individual to safely operate machinery or aircraft. At the first sign of symptoms, IMMEDIATELY stop work and seek medical advice.

July 19, 1993 Davidson Leader

### **Children and Pesticides**

“How Much Risk Do Pesticides Pose To Children?” is the subtitle of an article by journalist’s Sharon Begley and Mary Hager in the July 5, 1993 edition of Newsweek. The main heading is in the form of a warning, “Better Watch Those Fresh Fruits”. They say, “This is what we now know about pesticides and children:

By the age of 1, the average child has been exposed to more risk of cancer from pesticides than the Environmental Protection Agency says she should get over her entire life, calculates Fichard Wiles of the non-profit Environmental Working Group in a study released last week.

Legal residues - amounts of pesticides allowed to remain in food are calculated with adults in mind. If a child consumed as much pesticides as the EPA permits, the risk of cancer could be hundreds of times what EPA deems acceptable.”

They describe the source of this startling information as follows; “All this and more will make headlines this week with the release of a report from the National Academy of Sciences on “Pesticides in the Diets of Infants and Children.” Three years late and more closely held than missile codes, the \$1.1 million report by a 14-member panel is expected to conclude that children are more vulnerable to carcinogenic and neurotoxic pesticides than adults are, and to slam the EPA for failing to protect children.”

Earlier this year Dr. Richard Jackson of the California Department of Health told the PBS’s “Frontline” program that pesticide residues are “100 to 500 times what is safe for children.” He went on to say, “though less than 1 percent of produce tested has more pesticides on it or in it than is legal. That’s like setting the speed limit at 7,000mph and congratulating yourself that no one has broken it.”

The journalist say children are particularly vulnerable to pesticides. They went on to say, “One reason children are particularly sensitive is that the same amount of a pesticide has a greater effect on a small body than a large one. Also, children are strange eaters: dining on nothing but cherries one day, they may consume 10 times more of a food than EPA assumed when it set residue limits. Kids are also more sensitive because chemicals may initiate cancer more readily in the rapidly dividing cells of children than in the quiescent cells of adults. And neurotoxins can penetrate a child’s relatively porous blood-brain barrier, wreaking more damage on a nervous system still getting wired up than on one already formed.”

Even before the report is released, Jeff Nedelman of the Grocery Manufacturers of America has declared they are going to enforce the scientific recommendations. The Clinton administration has stated, “It will intensify its efforts to reduce the use of high risk pesticides by promoting alternatives to chemical intensive farming.”

The journalists report that Sweden has reduced its pesticide use by 50 per cent with virtually no decrease in their harvest. Campbell Soup Co. uses no pesticides at all on tomatoes grown in Mexico; they reap as much fruit as ever.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator, Carol Browner told Newsweek “The administration for the first time has made a commitment to a real reduction in pesticides.” She went on to say, “prohibiting the use of only 10 pesticides (out of the 70 carcinogens) from 15 foods could cut cancer risk 80 percent, according to

an earlier NAS model. By protecting children from pesticides in just the years before kindergarten, we would slash their total lifetime risk of cancer from these chemicals.”

Parents and grandparents do many things to help their children and grandchildren through life. It is obvious from U.S. National Academy Report of “Pesticides in the Diets of Infants and Children” the most important item infants and children need today is a safe (unpolluted), nutritious food supply, and a clean environment. It is important to start today; if we drift for another twenty years like we have in the last twenty, conditions will be irreversible.

September 13, 1993

**Where have all the rabbits gone?**

Where have all the rabbits gone? Rarely is there a rabbit track in the snow in the yard in winter and farmers rarely see them in the fields in the summer any more. Some people speculate that we are in the low point in one of "nature's cycles". The "nature's cycle" referred to is when a species become overpopulated and will be attacked by a disease that will eliminate most of them. There may be other reasons.

Journalist Caroline Fox in an article in the summer of 1991 edition of the Journal of Pesticide Reform reports on the LD 50 rating of the agricultural herbicide "Roundup" (glyphosate). The report showed a profound gender related difference of the herbicides effects on male and female rabbits used in the LD 50 test. She reports the LD 50 rating (when half the test animals die is 794mg/kg of body weight for female rabbits and 5010 mg/kg for male rabbits. Therefore males have over six times the tolerance females have.

The Pesticide Safety Handbook published by Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food and Saskatchewan Human Resources, Labour and Employment describes the LD 50 test procedures as follows.

"The accepted method of recording the relative toxicity of a pesticide is the Lethal Dose 50% (LD 50) value. This is the estimated dose of the chemical which, when administered, will kill 50% of the test animals under stated conditions. This is one of the accepted parameters used to denote hazard, but care must be exercised in its interpretation. The figures which designate the LD 50 values are expressed in milligrams of the chemical (usually technical material or active ingredient) per kilogram of body weight of the test animal. The chemical dose to kill a 2000 pound horse will be about 10 times the dose for a 200 pound foal. (The LD 50's will be approximately the same for the foal and the horse). For any one group of test animals of the same species, therefore, the weight of each animal has to be determined."

The report comments on age and species. "The LD 50 values are seriously affected by the age of the test animals and strains of the same species may react very differently to the same treatment. For this reason, the LD 50 values developed for one species only begin to inspire confidence after numerous tests have been conducted by many workers under varying conditions. It is because pesticides are selective in their action, and therefore different species of animal life react differently to such a degree, that the compounds are useful. Thus, the LD 50 values for rats or dogs may have little bearing on the value for birds or humans."

Method of exposure affects the LD 50 rating. "Toxicity also varies with the route of absorption into the body. LD 50 values are therefore determined for different routes of administration; the oral, dermal, and respiratory routes being of most practical significance." The LD 50 rating for toxicity was the first test carried out on pesticides. They are now, in addition, tested for teratogenic (birth defects) mutagenic (genetically transmitted defects) and carcinogenic effects. Personally, I believe the LD 50 rating for toxicity should be reduced to LD 0 with a few plus points to allow for a margin of safety.

The question is -- have the rabbits disappeared because of "nature's cycle" or has the herbicide Roundup, which has been used in Saskatchewan for quite a number of years, eliminated the female rabbits? Until we find out, it would be prudent to make sure females of the human species are not exposed to the chemical Roundup in any way.

November 2000 *alive* #217

### **Fighting the Spray Flu**

Ann Sarich lived most of her life in the Davidson district. Davidson is in the geographic centre of the grain growing area of Saskatchewan. A few years ago when she was in her senior years, I met her in the Davidson post office. She was coughing and sneezing so I asked her, "Have you got the flu?" She said, "Yes, the spray flu."

It was June and we were at the peak of the herbicide spraying season. Many seniors blame their summer colds and flu on agricultural herbicide and pesticide spraying.

Saskatchewan uses more toxic agricultural chemicals than any other province in Canada. Some years we have a pest called orange blossom wheat midge. It's a small fly that lives in the ground in a cocoon most of the year and comes out of the ground when the wheat is headed out and destroys the wheat kernel. In 1999 a couple of farm districts close to Davidson had wheat midge infestations. They were sprayed with a toxic pesticide and following the crop spraying, almost everyone had the flu.

Science has now proven Ann Sarich (who is no longer with us) and all of the other seniors right. Microbiologist Dr Greg Blank, working with food science researchers at the University of Manitoba, has confirmed that toxic bacteria may be spread when farm chemicals are sprayed on the land. I believed the toxins in the agricultural chemicals were making people sick, but I also thought toxic chemicals would destroy any bacteria in the water. Dr Blank has demonstrated that in some instances toxic agricultural chemicals encourage the growth of dangerous bacteria in the sprayer-water. The dangerous pathogens or bacteria may be present in the untreated water the chemicals are mixed in. Farmers frequently use water from farm sloughs or dugouts that are not tested or treated for bacteria.

### **Chemistry Exam**

For the University of Manitoba study, researchers used the amounts and concentrations recommended for field application. They tested the following commonly used herbicides, pesticides and insecticides: Round-Up, Poast and Merge, Gramoxone, Afolan, 2,4-D, Dithane M45, Benlate, Bravo 500, Ridomil 240EC, Thiram 75WP, Seven XLR+, Lorsban 4E, Diazinon 500, Ambush 500EC and Lagon 480E.

Pathogens such as *E. coli* 0157:H7, *salmonella typhimurium*, *salmonella enteritidis*, *shigella sonnei*, *shigella flexneri* and *listeria monocytogenes* were cultured and added to the solutions. The researchers tracked the growth rates of the various bacteria over one- to 24-hour periods. In some cases, Blank said, the pathogens died within an hour or were gone once 24 hours had passed. In others, they multiplied.

The highest growth for all types of pathogenic bacteria, including *E. coli* 0157:H7, was observed in Bravo 500. "With Bravo we consistently see a lot of [dangerous] micro-

organisms," Blank said. "We're not only getting the survival, but consistent growth."

When the researchers left the solutions sitting for a longer time—96 hours—they found even more evidence of survivability. *E. coli* 0157:H7, for example, survived in Lorsban 4E and Ambush 500EC that long. *E. coli* 0157:H7 caused six deaths and 2,000 illnesses at Walkerton, Ontario earlier this year.

Saskatchewan has over 40 million acres in cropland and most of it is sprayed with toxic chemicals more than once every growing season. This creates the opportunity to spray a lot of bacteria into the air and everyone living or travelling in the farming area is exposed to them.

Previously everyone has been concerned about airborne toxins. In an article in the July 27 edition of the *Manitoba Co-Operator*, journalist Lorraine Stevenson reports that statistics out of the Centre for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia show that as many as 41 percent of all cases of food-borne illness can be traced to consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables. In the US, outbreaks related to contaminated produce doubled between 1973 and 1987 and again between 1988 and 1992.

Pesticides developed for biological warfare during World War II were adapted for agricultural purposes after the war. Agent Orange, a combination of the pesticides 2,4-D and 2,4, 5T, was used extensively as biological control in the Vietnam war. I would be amazed if no one prior to Dr Banks realized the effects of these pesticides in promoting the growth of pathogens.

Today transnational drug and chemical companies are selling farmers large volumes of chemicals that make us ill and large volumes of drugs to try to make us healthy. The foundation for good health is not more drugs and chemicals--it's a clean environment and certified organic food.

January 31, 2005 Davidson Leader

### **Urban concerns about pesticides eradicating from the environment**

Open letter to:

Premier Lorne Calvert, Environment Minister David Forbes, Saskatchewan Water Minister Peter Prebble, Agriculture Minister Mark Wartman, Deputy Minister of Environment Lily Stonehouse, Sask Party Environment Critic Yogi Huyghebaert, and MLA Arm River-Watrous Greg Brkich

Re: Part 2 - Eradicating Pesticides From Environment-Urban Concerns

On Jan. 15, 2005, the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate (SOD) held a restructuring meeting at Cedar Lodge, Dundurn. The early morning weather report said, "temperature -33 degrees below zero and with wind chill -41 degrees." Even though Tam on the planning committee, I decided I would stay home. However, at 7:30 a.m., I received a phone call from Paule Hjertaas, Regina. She said she was going to the SOD meeting at Dundurn and she would pick me up at 9:30. She didn't even ask me if I wanted to go. She was right on time so we were on our way. Paule was prepared to make the long 280 mile trip in -33 degree weather because she wanted to meet organic farmers who had abandoned pesticides completely and to also let them know about her projects.

Paule Hjertaas has multiple chemical sensitivities (MCS) and has been formally aware of her condition for the last 18 years. However, when she was 13, she had her first reaction from pesticides. She lost consciousness for several days after using a product called Killer Kane on their lawn. I had met her at a number of environmental meetings and except when she was speaking, she always wore a safety mask. However, as we started up the highway I noticed she was not wearing it. I said, "On a day like today when it is -33 below and no one is spraying I guess you are comfortable without your safety mask." She said that she could function quite well under these conditions.

However, in the summertime when the air is full of pesticides and other pollutants, her travel is quite limited. Hjertaas, who grew up in Quebec and has a Bachelor of Science degree, is also a biologist, a science writer, editor, organic gardener and an environmental and holistic health consultant who lives in their environmentally safe house in Regina. She is active in the struggle to have the cosmetic use of pesticides banned in Saskatchewan cities.

Dale and Paule Hjertaas have two children. They both had problems with chemical sensitivity. Their 21-year-old son is taking engineering at the University of Saskatchewan and their 18-year-old daughter is taking political science at McGill University, Montreal. The children's health problems were, less serious than their mother's because they were living in an environmentally safe home. They also had a good diet, proper nutrition and supplements; therefore, have not suffered nearly as much from chemical sensitivities as their mother did.

Paule says that if she goes traveling she cannot stay in a hotel and has to sleep in the car. If she walks down the street where neighbours have sprayed their lawns, she can be in real trouble and even pass out.



She said that her daughter at the age of 12 was riding a bike to school and passed out when she rode past a sprayed lawn. She had severe respiratory problems, pain and neurological problems.

Hjertaas says that 12.6 per cent of the Canadian population or 3,800,000 people suffer from multiple chemical sensitivities. Although very few have been diagnosed or treated, 48 per cent (1,800,000) blame pesticide exposure for triggering their illnesses. She describes chemical sensitivity as follows:

Multiple chemical sensitivity is an acquired disorder with recurrent symptoms occurring in response to exposure to chemical compounds at doses far below those found to cause harmful effects in the general population. Because of the wide range of symptoms, diagnosis can be challenging. Added to this problem is a reluctance to blame “life-enhancing” chemicals, often created by the same companies who create the prescriptions used to treat the resulting symptoms.

Often the onset of symptoms is delayed, which adds to the difficulty of pinpointing the cause. Common offenders include pesticides, petrochemicals, artificial fragrances, air fresheners, food additives, chemicals in new carpets, paints, glue, detergents and fabric softeners. Effects of exposure range from a general desire to avoid the chemical, to headache or confusion, to allergic flu-like symptoms, to joint pain, to heart arrhythmia, or to anaphylactic shock.

Reaction typically increases in intensity with repeated or prolonged exposures and as the body burden increases beyond the ability to cope, reactions to a wider variety of chemicals can occur. As a result, MCS sufferers often withdraw from normal daily activities due to fear of the onset of debilitating symptoms.

Hjertaas reports that the following Canadian associations have asked for phase out of pesticides used for cosmetic purposes in urban areas:

World Wildlife Fund (Canada)

Sierra Club of Canada

Toronto Environmental Alliance

Pesticide Free Ontario

David Suzuki Foundation

Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment  
(CAPE)

Canadian Coalition for Health and Environment (CCHE)

Ontario College of Family Physicians (April 2004 report)

Canadian Cancer Society

Canadian Institute of Child Health (CICH)

Canadian Public Health Association (CPHA)

The Ontario Public Health Association

Canadian Environmental Law Association

Registered Nurses Association of Ontario (Partnership for Pesticide Bylaws, Ontario)

Association of Early Childhood Educators - Ontario (Partnership for Pesticide Bylaws, Ontario)

Breast Cancer Prevention Coalition (Partnership for Pesticide Bylaw, Ontario)

Women’s Healthy Environments Network (Partnership for Pesticide Bylaws, Ontario)

Unions and Churches

Great Lakes United (Partnership for Pesticide Bylaws, Ontario)

Canadian Union of Postal Workers (Partnership for Pesticide Bylaws, Ontario)

United Steel Workers of America (Partnership for Pesticide Bylaws, Ontario)

In Saskatchewan the following organizations, MDs and scientists requested a cosmetic pesticide bylaw at the Regina city hearings and/or letters to the school boards:

Regina Urban Environment Advisory Council (RUEAC)

Saskatchewan Lung Association

Dr. James Gomes, MSc, PhD, formerly of the Institute of Agricultural, Rural and Environmental Health, U of S and U of R.,

Dr. Delores Logan, Medical

Coordinator, Regina Community

Clinic (letter to Regina Public

School Board)

University of Saskatchewan, Academic Family Medicine, Regina Division (letter to Regina Public School Board)

Dr. Maurice Hennick, Deputy Medical Health Officer, Regina Health District states, "I have forwarded to you the position statement of the Canadian Institute of Child Health, which we, from a public health stance, would support. In the same way Public Health has also indicated that we support the views expressed by the Canadian Public Health Association."

Scientists:

Tanya Dahms, U of R, chemistry professor

Renata Bailey, U of R, chemistry professor (City of Regina Parks and Recreation Committee hearings, Dec. 12, .2002)

Fiona Goorman, representing the Biology Undergraduate and Graduate Society, U of R (City of Regina Parks and Recreation Committee hearings)

Hjertaas concluded, "People who suffer from multiple chemical sensitivity know these problems are very serious, real and not understood by many people. It is very difficult to get an accurate diagnosis because of the lack of medical training in that field." She would like to hear from people in rural areas who are suffering from MCS. Her address is Paule Hjertaas, 15 Olson Place, Regina, S4S 2J6.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, Paule Hjertaas' story is providing information about what is going on in urban centers. However, there are many people in small town Saskatchewan or on farms who are suffering severely from their exposure to chemical drift during the seven-month spraying season. However, they don't have any political clout and are too isolated to attract any political attention. It is also obvious that when the urbanites get their environment cleaned up, they will not want pesticide pollution from rural communities.

I also hope you realize that all these people, whether urban 'or rural, need an adequate supply of pesticide free water and a good supply of certified organic food. When are you going to show leadership to give these people an opportunity to live normal lives and enjoy the environmental freedom we take for granted.

Elmer Laird, President

Back To The Farm Research Foundation

July 5, 2004 Davidson Leader

**Public should be warned of bug spray use**

Open letter to Ross Findlater,  
Saskatchewan's chief medical health officer:

RE: Insect repellents

Mosquitoes have carried a variety of viruses ever since I can remember. However, today we have the West Nile virus and apparently we don't have an inoculant to protect humans from it. In your interviews you have done with CBC Radio that I have heard, I haven't heard you recommend protective clothing. The brochure Be Aware, Be Prepared Mosquito Season and the West Nile virus published by the Provincial Department of Health, does recommend protective clothing and covering baby carriages with mosquito netting. However, the main message I get from your interviews is to use bug spray. Even though the bug spray may have just as disastrous effects as the West Nile virus, I don't hear you warning anyone about the toxic effect of the bug spray. To date I have never heard of a non-toxic bug spray. If there is one, you should be the first to inform the public. In fact, we have pesticide spraying season here in the agricultural section of Saskatchewan for seven months a year and I don't hear any warnings from you or other medical health officers about that. I know you are employed by a government that supports chemical agriculture, but I think the chief medical health officer should be warning the citizens about the spray drift they are exposed to seven months a year.

Dr. Allan Cessna of the National Hydrology Institute, reports there are herbicides in all the surface water and one-third of the deep wells in the province. In addition, the amount of non-organic food which is grown with the use of pesticides is a hazard. Here in Saskatchewan, as you are no doubt aware, we have the highest rate of breast and cervical cancer and the second highest rate of prostate cancer. We use one-third of the pesticides used in Canada and I know that pesticides cause cancer. Our cancer statistics continue to rapidly increase.

In my opinion the most important thing anyone can do to prevent West Nile virus and all other illnesses that you have failed to mention is this: Have the most healthy diet possible to build up a strong immune system. That is the most effective method to prevent disease. You never mention it. If we are going to have healthy citizens we need a clean environment, unpolluted air and water and certified organic food. If we don't recognize this as the foundation of our Medicare system, the system is doomed to failure.

Elmer Laird, president,  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

# WATER QUALITY

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January 24, 1994 Davidson Leader

## Water Quality

A long overdue four years study to ensure water quality in rural Saskatchewan under the Canada- Saskatchewan Agriculture Green Plan Agreement was recently announced. The study will be headed up by Dr. Hans Peterson, PHD Senior Research Scientist, Water Quality Scientist, Saskatchewan Research Council, Saskatoon.

The study could cost as much as \$32 million, with \$500,000 covered by the Green Plan. The rest of the cost will be paid by Saskatchewan Research Council, Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration, several provincial agencies, private companies and universities.

A \$41.6 million federal-provincial Green Plan agreement was announced last summer by former federal agriculture minister Charlie Mayer and provincial agriculture minister Darrel Cunningham.

Dr. Peterson in an article in Prairie Water News published by the P.F.R.A. described his concerns about the chemical brew that is being used to treat water supplies today. He said, "Farmers and small communities are faced with source waters that, in some cases, have to be diluted with distilled water 10 times to get to the quality of the South Saskatchewan River. Therefore, not only is it too complicated to use the chemical brew technique to treat individual and small community supplies but the problems of these waters are much worse!

Solutions to the problems of small users are long overdue. We expect that by combining new emerging technologies and old appropriate technologies with dugout and watershed management, we will be able to achieve results comparable to chemical brew techniques. The requirement for this to succeed is a strong collaboration between all levels of government, industry and academia. Farmers no longer have time for jurisdictional quarrels and are demanding solutions."

The Prairie Farm Assistance Act was passed by the Federal Government in 1935 for the purpose of developing soil and water conservation programs on the prairie. The P.F.R.A. water conservation has been very successful. They have conserved large quantities of "run-off" water by building dams and dugouts for human and livestock use. However, water quality has deteriorated because of the use of toxic pesticides and using chlorine to treat dam and dugout water for bacteria.

Organic material builds up in surface water over a period of years in dams and dugouts and when chlorine is used to destroy the bacteria in the water it mixes with the organic material creating a substance known as trihalomethanes. Health authorities recognize that both toxic pesticide residues and trihalomethanes will cause cancer.

Even though the study was just announced they have been working since August Last fall they set up a research project on the farm of Jim Nodge at Craik. Jim said his dugout water was in terrible condition. Dr. Peterson installed a large sand filter and

carbon filter in the Nodge basement and the family is enjoying good water that isn't receiving any kind of chemical treatment. They are delighted with the results

It is hoped Dr. Peterson and his research crew will be able to continue to develop good, affordable water treatment systems for farm and small community water treatment plants. However, the only way to keep pesticides out of the surface water that most people use for drinking and cooking in Saskatchewan is to quit using them.

February 7, 1994 Davidson Leader

Saskatchewan Environment and Public Safety have abandoned their responsibility of testing municipal water supplies for pesticides. In a letter dated December 21, 1993, addressed to the Mayor and Council of the Town of Davidson, R.G. Ruggles, Director of the Water Quality Branch, said, "We have changed the sampling requirements to reflect the department's new minimum guidelines for drinking water quality."

In the past few years, Davidson's water supply has been tested annually by the Saskatchewan Research Council's Analytical Services for the pesticides 2,4, 5, -T, 2,4-D, Lindane and Alpha-BHC.

The Waterworks Monitoring Schedule attached to the letter lists the pesticides Davidson Water Supply will no longer be tested for: atrazine, bromoxynil (Bucnil), dicamba (Banvel), diclofopmethyl (Hoe Grass), 2,4-dichlorophenoxyacetic acid (2,4-D), lindane, 2-methyl-4-chlorophenoxyacetic acid (MCPA), Pentachlorophenol (PCP), picloram, propanil, triallate (Avedex BW), trifluralin (Treflan). (There is obviously a discrepancy between the pesticides on the proposed Monitoring Schedule and the tests that were actually carried out in the past.)

Mr. Alvin Yuen, contact person for Saskatchewan Environment and Public Safety said the tests were discontinued because of a consultant's report that recommended they were no longer necessary. He went on to say that it was also a cost cutting measure. However, he said communities could do their own testing if they wished at a cost of approximately \$150.00 per test for each pesticide they wanted to test. He said tests had been cancelled for all Saskatchewan communities. Mr. Yuen went on to say that the cities of Regina and Saskatoon had their own water testing facilities and would do their own monitoring.

I reported a few weeks ago that Dr. Hans Peterson, Senior Water Quality Researcher, Saskatchewan Research Council, said that it would take eight parts of distilled water to add to one part of some rural water supplies to make them equivalent to the quality of the water in the South Saskatchewan River. It is obvious we have three levels of environmental monitoring or health protection in Saskatchewan.

1. Highest level of protection is in Regina and Saskatoon. The water is monitored for both trihalomethanes and pesticides.
2. All other municipal water supplies will no longer be monitored for pesticides unless the community foots the bill, but will continue to be monitored for trihalomethanes every three months.
3. Farm wells and dugouts where water is not monitored for either pesticides or trihalomethanes.

There is a division of responsibility for water monitoring, both Environment and Public Safety are responsible for monitoring municipal water supplies but only Public Health is responsible for farm wells and dugouts. However, it is the farmer's responsibility to forward the sample to the provincial lab. To date Provincial Health has not advised farmers that their water supplies should be tested for pesticides or trihalomethanes (both are recognized as cancer causing). Provincial Health continues to issue reports on farm wells and dugouts saying they are safe for infant feeding and they haven't been tested for pesticides or trihalomethanes.

The questions are: (1) Why dispense with pesticide testing when there hasn't been any reduction in the use of pesticides in the province? (2) When will the government recognize that water pollution is directly related to soaring health costs?

June 19, 2000 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:  
Mr. John Swan, Associate Editor  
Regina Leader Post

Dear Mr. Swan:

Thank you for your invitation to write a letter to “the editor” of the Leader Post in response to your editorial entitled “Water concerns need response” that was published in the June 6, 2000 edition of your paper. In your editorial you said, “There is nothing to indicate the testing procedures in Saskatchewan are either deficient or substandard”.

An article in the February 26, 1998 edition of The Western Producer entitled “Ag chemicals in west’s water” by Michael Raine quotes Dr. Allan Cessna of the National Hydrological Centre in Saskatoon as follows:

“Farmers and Custom applicators will begin to void pesticide residues through their urine within 24 hours of beginning to spray. The exposure to the product (pesticides) is 98 per cent dermal (skin) and mainly comes through the hands. For people not even involved in spraying, they too will show levels of exposure.”

Cessna said, “Herbicides are present in every water supply in Western Canada. Some dugouts, considered to have drinkable water by 15,000 Saskatchewan farm families, contain levels of pesticides as much as 1,000 times more detectable than European water supplies. [have yet to analyze water from a farm dugout that didn’t contain residues.. residues can be found in ground wells, as well. Even if a conservative 10 per cent of pesticides fail to reach their target and become part of the environment, either in whole or in their degraded parts, the result is one million kilograms of product deposited elsewhere in the environment.”

The provincial laboratory, operated by the Saskatchewan Department of Health, tests samples of water taken by farmers from farm dugouts or farm wells. They do not test the samples for pesticides. Frequently, I have heard farmers and their wives say, “My water test came back and it is fit for infant feeding.” However, it was not tested for pesticides and the provincial lab does not inform the farmers that their samples are not tested for pesticides.

The provincial government used to provide funds to the Saskatchewan Research Council to test the water supplies of small Saskatchewan communities for pesticides. The Romanow NDP government, when they were elected in 1991, discontinued the grant to test small town water supplies. They are no longer tested for pesticides.

I have written to all Provincial Ministers of Environment and Health in the last 20 years asking them to print on the bottom of the Drinking Water Analysis form that accompanies water samples from farms or small towns “This Sample is not Tested for Pesticides”.

There has been no response and many rural people are led to believe there are no pesticides in their supplies. City residents have their own testing systems but most of them are using the same surface water Dr. Cessna is talking about. The facts are the provincial government is not as concerned about people’s health as they are about the survival of the agricultural chemical companies.

They are not prepared to admit they don’t test for pesticides. All provinces and the federal government have a policy to support chemical agriculture only. Saskatchewan is the largest user of toxic agriculture chemicals in Canada.



We have a spraying season that lasts seven months a year. The Saskatchewan government spends less than one half of one per cent on organic agriculture. Statistics are not available on deaths or illnesses caused by agriculture pesticides. The provincial government refuses to recognize that air, water and food polluted with toxic agriculture chemicals may be a part of the reason for our health crisis. The time for the press to investigate the relationship between toxic chemical pollution and health-care costs is long overdue.

Safe water is one of our basic needs and the more all citizens know about water quality the better. The press must play a key role in keeping us informed.

Elmer Laird, president  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

September 25, 2000 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:  
Saskatchewan's Health Minister Pat Atkinson

Re: Pesticide testing laboratories in all trading centres

My neighbour, 74-year-old retired farmer Mike Shymko lives on an acreage on the northside of Davidson between Highway 11 and the northern entrance to Davidson. Shymko loves to garden and is a very good gardener. He grows a large vegetable, fruit and flower garden by family standards. He gives most of it away to family and neighbours. Shymko also watches many of the newscasts on TV. Since the Walkerton, Ont. disaster which has received lots of national publicity, he has become concerned about the quality of the water he uses to water his garden.

There is a large bore pit between his property and Hwy. 11. The bore pit was dug by the department of highways in the early '70s to supply building material (earth) for the highway. He pumps the water for his garden directly from the bore pit. Since Walkerton, Shymko is concerned about the quality of the water in the bore pit and wonders if it contains E.coli 0157:H7, Salmonella typhimurium, Salmonella enteritis, Shigella sonnei, Shilla flexneri and listeria and Listeria monocytogenes that might be found in bore pits, dugouts or sloughs. He asked me if I would help find out where to get the bore pit water he uses on his garden tested for dangerous pathogens or bacteria.

I contacted Sask Water for information, Candice Wong, administrator for Sask Water's Rural Water Quality Advisory Program, said that Bill Anderson, a technologist would come out to Davidson and do the following test for \$100, plus \$7 GST. All measurements below are maximum allowable concentrations

Analyte	Units	Objective
Carbonate	mg/L	ng
Calcium	mg/L	ng
Chlorides	mg/L	250
Bicarbonate	mg/L	ng
Potassium	mg/L	ng
Magnesium	mg/L	200
Sodium	mg/L	300
Hydroxide	mg/L	ng
Sulphate	mg/L	500
Sum of Ions	mg/L	1500
Total Alkalinity	mg/L	500
Total Hardness	mg/L	800
Organic Carbon	mg/L	ng
Nitrate	mg/L	45
Boron	mg/L	5
Selenium	mg/L	0.01
Aluminum	mg/L	ng
Arsenic	µg/L	25

Barium	mg/L	1.0
Cadmium	mg/L	0.005
Chromium	mg/L	0.05
Copper	mg/L	1.0
Iron	mg/L	0.3
Manganese	mg/L	0.05
Lead	mg/L	0.01
Zinc	mg/L	5.0
Specific Conductivity	us/cm	ng
pH	pH units	6.5 to 9.0
Fecal Coliform	ct/100/mL	zero
Total Coliform	ct/100/mL	zero
Uranium	µg/L	100

I picked up a pamphlet from the Rural Service Centre in Davidson entitled Water Testing, Services, Schedules and Fees published by the Saskatchewan Health Provincial Laboratory, Environmental Sciences Section of the Water Laboratory at 3211 Albert St., Regina. Following is a list of pesticides that will be tested by the Provincial Laboratory if requested and the cost for the individual test. (Note: MAC means maximum acceptable concentration) also, 7 per cent GST must be added to the cost.

Pesticide	MAC( mg/L)	Fee
atrazine	0.005	\$50
bromoxynil	0.005	\$70
carbofuran	0.09	\$50
chlorpyrifos	0.09	\$50
cyanazine	0.01	\$50
dicamba	0.12	\$70
2,4-D	0.1	\$70
2,4-DB	-	\$70
diazinon	0.02	\$50
dicamba	0.12	\$70
dichlorprop	-	\$70
diclofop-methyl	0.009	\$70
dimethoate	0.02	\$50
lindane	0.004	\$50
malathion	0.19	\$50
MCPA	-	\$70
MCPP (mecoprop)	-	\$70
pentachlorophenol	0.06	\$70
picloram	0.19	\$70
simazine	0.01	\$50
triallate	0.23	\$50
trifluralin	0.045	\$50

It is doubtful if any individual will spend \$50 to \$70 to get a pesticide test because large numbers of pesticides are used in every community and the wind blows and the water runs. That means tests for one pesticide would be inconclusive to determine the purity of the water. Furthermore, Dr. Allan Cessna of the National Hydrology Centre in Saskatoon said, "Herbicides are present in every surface water supply in Western Canada. Some dugouts, considered to have drinkable water by 15,000 Saskatchewan farm families, contain levels of pesticides as much as 1,000 times more detectable than

European water supplies. I have yet to analyze water from a farm dugout that didn't contain herbicide residues.. residues can be found in ground (wells) as well."

Your government quit providing grants to the Saskatchewan Research Council to test water supplies in small communities in 1991. You no doubt thought it a waste of time because you knew the pesticides were there.

Our Midwest District Health public health inspector and also staff from the provincial laboratory told me that if Shymko sent a water sample to the provincial laboratory for a "Total Coliforms" test it would cost \$12.50 and if it tested positive they would test for E.coli 0157:H7 but they wouldn't test for any other dangerous pathogens or bacteria. When I ask why, they said, that was federal health requirements.

Well madam minister, all governments in Canada have had a policy to promote chemical agriculture for 50 years. However, the public have been kept in the dark about pesticide residues. In Saskatchewan, as elsewhere, we have ag. reps. who promote chemical solutions for every agriculture problem free of charge, in fact you spend millions of dollars annually promoting chemical agriculture. However, you have never did anything until very recently to identify the environmental pollution they cause.

The time is long overdue to provide that information. To date the technology to test water and food for chemical residues has been housed in government laboratories or universities away from public view. We would recommend that you place mass spectrophotometer in gas-liquid chromatograph in rural service centres with the staff to operate them.

This sophisticated equipment has been around for many years and is used in many labs to detect pesticide residues. If and when you decide to take this action all citizens could take their food and water to get tested for pesticide residues and we will be on the road to a clean environment and good health when all citizens understand where the pollution is.

Elmer Laird, president,  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

September 2001 *alive* #227**Pesticide Cocktail**

If Canadians want a clean environment, they will have to take action themselves. Governments are not going to do it.

The Back to the Farm Research Foundation in Davidson, Saskatchewan (of which I am president) has started a program of testing community water supplies for pesticides. Davidson is a community of 1,150 people about halfway between Regina and Saskatoon on Highway #11. It's a trading centre, serving a community of 2,000-3,000 rural and small town residents. Half of the water supply comes from a deep well and the other half comes from a small dam supplied by run-off water from the spring snow melt. The water runs over miles of fields that are sprayed with toxic agricultural pesticides several times during the growing season.

In my June 2001 column I reported that five Davidson infants had developed cancer in the last year. One baby was born with it. I asked the Minister of Health, John Neilson to investigate, which he promised to do. It didn't happen. The Cancer Agency, which is a part of the Department of Health, did establish a Cancer Cluster Committee (actually there were four infant cancer cases and one family moved to Weyburn. The three remaining infants all suffered from different kinds of cancer). But the Committee refused to investigate because the cancers were not a "cluster" or all the same kind.

The Committee is prepared to accept three infant cancers in this small community as normal or the "status quo." Our board of directors at Back to the Farm is not. Directors are testing the Davidson public water supply as well as the four public wells in the adjoining rural municipalities of Willner and Arm River to see if they are polluted with toxic pesticides (herbicides, pesticides and fungicides).

We have met with Davidson town council and have obtained its moral support as well as a financial contribution. We will meet with the rural councils shortly. We have also written and asked the Saskatchewan Department of Health for a list of accredited laboratories to test the water. We will send samples to two different labs for verification.

**Saskatchewan Residents Misled**

The provincial laboratory operated by Saskatchewan Health has only very recently started testing for pesticides.

Farmers and rural communities that have relied on the provincial laboratory for many years to test their farm water supplies have been misled. They assumed the water samples they were sending to the provincial lab were being tested for pesticides but they were not. The Blakeney NDP government (1971-82) and the Devine Conservative government (1982-91) both gave grants to the Saskatchewan Research Council to test community or small town water supplies for some pesticides. However, the tests were meaningless.

They were not related to the agricultural chemicals used in the area. The results were never published, so Saskatchewan citizens have really been in the dark about the pollution in their drinking water.

The Romanow government discontinued the grant when elected in 1991 and no pesticide tests have been done for 10 years. Romanow was not an environmentalist and his government didn't seem to be aware that pure, unpolluted water and nutritious, certified organic food is the foundation of a good health-care program.

Following the water pollution problem at North Battleford, the opposition Saskatchewan Party received a leaked document last spring from an "unknown" source in government that showed there was a big coverup in both the Saskatchewan Water Corporation and the Environment Department about the quality of small town water supplies.

One hundred and nineteen communities out of a total of slightly over 500 had levels of trihalomethanes beyond acceptable levels. It is rather ironic that Davidson was one of those communities and received notice of this at the same time that the Cancer Agency refused to investigate the three infant cancer cases.

Trihalomethanes are created by organic matter in the water mixed with chlorine. Scientists have known for 25 years that both trihalomethanes and pesticides cause cancer. (Incidentally, one of the infants with cancer had surgery when it was 10 days old. Its mother said the tumour removed from its kidney was the size of a softball.)

We are inviting Dr Allan Cessna, National Hydrology Centre (federal government), Saskatoon, to a public meeting to talk about pesticide pollution of Saskatchewan water supplies. The public has been in the dark about water quality far too long. He has been testing water for pesticides for many years and says that all the surface water and 30 per cent of the deep wells he has tested have pesticides—many with very high levels. However, the provincial government has ignored all his reports. We will ask him to help collect water samples for testing while he is here.

Cancer in Canada is one of our main growth industries. We spend billions of dollars on both cancer research and treatment but very little on finding the cause. I would challenge all Canadians to start testing their water and food for pesticides in their own communities. We must take collective action to clean up our environment. It is obvious that a "do it yourself" policy is our only hope. The government has had the opportunity for at least 30 years and our environment continues to deteriorate.

July 9, 2001 Davidson Leader

In preparation to test local drinking water supplies for pesticide residues, I called Dr. Roy Cullimore, head of the Regina Water Research Institute. He is the microbiologist that was taken down to visit the Titanic a couple of years ago. He recommended that I call two chemical testing laboratories in Edmonton and Calgary. The manager of the Edmonton lab said that we would need a list of agriculture pesticides used in our area. We need to supply both the list and their active ingredients. We asked the United Grain Growers, Pioneer Grain and Saskatchewan Wheat Pool for a list of the chemicals they market in the area. They were very co-operative and Davidson Mayor Jim Cross and I collected the list. All three market relatively the same herbicides, insecticides and fungicides. A local volunteer integrated the lists and prepared a list of the products and ingredients. The information was taken from the Guide to Crop Protection 2001. The 358-page publication is the handbook of chemical agriculture in Saskatchewan and is available free of charge at all Rural Service Centers in the province. The agriculture chemical dealers in the Davidson community market (sell) 64 of the 110 products listed in the Guide that are used in Saskatchewan.

To the left is the list of herbicides, insecticides and fungicides and their active ingredients that are sold in this community.

We are looking for community assistance in this project. We are attempting to have an accurate list as possible to send with water samples, and if we have made any errors, please let us know. Or, if we have missed any products also let us know. Many people in the community have computers, some are on the Internet. We have excellent library service in the province and it is to be hoped that interested citizens will get involved in the research. Our local Librarian September Nadeau has volunteered to help anyone find information through the library and the Internet. In a couple of weeks when we have an accurate, complete list, we will submit it to the chemical testing laboratory and they will forward containers and instructions for taking water samples. Over the years I have heard that the "carrier" (liquid the chemical is suspended in) may be as toxic as the chemical. Local researchers might want to find out what is in the "carriers" of the various chemicals that are supplied in liquid form. We hope to hear from you soon. Phone me at 567-4260 or write Box 69, Davidson.

### Herbicides

Product	Active ingredient
2,4-D	2,4-D
MCPA	MCPA
Attain	fluroxypyr + 2,4-D
Achieve	tralkoxydim
Achieve Extra Gold	tralkoxydim + bromoxynil + MCPA E
Advance	trifluralin
Accord	quinclorac
Amitrol 240	amitrole
Avadex BW/MicroActiv	triallate
Banvel II	dicamba
Buctril M	bromoxynil + MCPA E
Curtail M	clopyralid + MCPA E
Champion Extra	fenoxaprop-p-ethyl thifensulfuron methyl +

### Insecticides

Decis 5	deltamethrin
Furadan	carbofuran
Lorsban	chlorpyrifos
Malathion	malathion
Matador	cyhalothrin-lambda
Sevin	carbaryl

### Fungicides

Bravo	chlorothalonil
Crown	carbathiin + thiabendazole
Dividend XL	difenoconazole + metalaxyl-M
Raxil	tebuconazole
Tilt 250	propiconazole
Vitaflow	thiram + carbathiin + lindane

Champion Plus	tribenuron methyl fenoxaprop-p-ethyl + MCPA E + 2,4-D E + thifensulfuron methyl
Dichlorprop	dichlorprop + 2,4-D
DyVel	dicamba + MCPA K
DyVel DS	dicamba + 2,4-D A + mecoprop
Edge	ethalfluralin
Estaprop	dichlorprop + 2,4-D E
Everest	flucarbazone-sodium
Express Pack	tribenuron methyl + 2,4-D E
Fortress	trallate + trifluralin
Fusion	fenoxaprop-p-ethyl + fluazifop-p-butyl
Horizon	clodinafop-propargyl
Harmony Total	clodinafop propargyl + thifensulfuron methyl + tribenuron methyl
Laser DF	fenoxaprop-p-ethyl + MCPA E + thifensulfuron methyl
Liberty	glufosinate ammonium
Linuron 480	linuron
Lontrel	clopyralid
Muster Toss-N-Go	ethametsulfuron methyl
Muster Gold/Muster Gold II	ethametsulfuron methyl + quizalofop-P-ethyl
Odyssey	imazamox + imazethapyr
Poast Ultra	sethoxydim
Puma 120 Super	fenoxaprop-p-ethyl
Pursuit	imazethapyr
Pursuit Ultra	sethoxydim + imazethapyr
Pardner	bromoxynil
Refine Extra Toss-N-Go	thifensulfuron methyl + tribenuron methyl
Reglone/Pro/240	diquat
Renegade	glyphosate
Roundup Dry/Renew	glyphosate
Roundup Original/Transorb	glyphosate
Rustler	glyphosate + dicamba
Select	clethodim
Sencor	metribuzin
Stampede EDF	propanil
Sundance	sulfosulfuron
Target	dicamba + mecoprop + MCPA A
Thumper	bromoxynil + 2,4-D E
Touchdown 480/XP	glyphosate
Treflan	trifluralin
Vantage Plus	glyphosate



October 8, 2001 Davidson Leader

On Oct. 3 Mike Shymko and I went to Enviro-Test Laboratories in Saskatoon to get the results of our water test for pesticides. On Aug. 15 we took samples from the Davidson deep well, the Davidson dam and the Arm River airport well. After paying \$8,158.22 and receiving what seemed like a two-year course in chemistry in about a half an hour we left and tried to figure out the results.

Originally we asked the laboratory to test for residues of 64 pesticides that were sold in Davidson and listed in the July 9, 2001 edition of *The Davidson Leader* along with a list of their active ingredients. The laboratory works on the active ingredients by name and in view of the fact some of the pesticides have the same active ingredients the list was reduced to 45. There was some pesticide pollution in all the water samples. The Davidson deep well had both a triallate (which is the active ingredient in the herbicides Avadex and Fortress) content of 2.9 parts per billion and deltamethrin (which is found in Decis 5) at 0.4 parts per billion. The Davidson dam sample also had a triallate content of 2.9 parts per billion. The airport well sample contained triallate at 0.6 parts per billion.

What do the tests mean? In terms of safety Dr. Allan Cessna, National Hydrology Water Institute, says that we have “guidelines on water pollution, not standards”. What that really means is that guidelines are set by politicians not scientists. It means we have more work to do to find out how much exposure citizens are getting to toxic chemicals that may be carcinogens through the water they are drinking, the food they are eating and the air they are breathing.

We have recently received copies through the Internet of the U.S. Public Law 140-170 Aug. 3, 1996 passed by the 104th Congress of the United States. It is called the Food Quality Protection Act of 1996. It is a 50-page document which on page 1518 has a section that recognizes the frailty of children. We haven't been able to get a copy of the regulations under the act to date.

We have also recently obtained a copy of a study entitled *Tough to Swallow: How Pesticide Companies Profit from Poisoning America's Tap Water*. The 43-page study was carried out by the Environmental Working Group. The study, which Davidson town and RM councillors and some other residents have received copies, report on tap water tests in a number of Midwestern states based on the standards of the Food Quality Protection Act.

They identify the cancer risk of tap water as a multiple of the safety standards established by the Food Quality Protection Act. In some communities it is 64 times the recommended standards. There are two things we need to do:

- find the U.S. standards and study them to find out how to properly measure our total exposure to pesticide pollutants; and
- pressure our governments to develop standards here that are equal to theirs or better.

Incidentally, Lisa Groves of Enviro-Test Laboratories is giving us information on how to collect air samples.

**Following is a list of active ingredients that were tested.**

**The symbol < means less than.**

Date of Analysis: Sept. 26, 2001			Davidson deep well	Davidson dam	Airport well
Analyte	Detection Limit	Units	L41777-1	L41777-2	L41777-3
Glyphosate	0.001	ppm	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001
AMPA	0.001	ppm	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001
Mecoprop	0.0001	ppm	<0.0001	<0.0001	<0.0001
MCPA	0.0001	ppm	<0.0001	<0.0001	<0.0001
Dicamba	0.0001	ppm	<0.0001	<0.0001	<0.0001
2,4-D	0.0001	ppm	<0.0001	<0.0001	<0.0001
Bromoxynil	0.0001	ppm	<0.0001	<0.0001	<0.0001
Trifluralin	0.0001	ppm	<0.0001	<0.0001	<0.0001
Triallate	0.0001	ppm	0.0029 (2.9 ppb)	0.0029 (2.9 ppb)	0.0006 (0.6 ppb)
Picloram	0.0001	ppm	<0.0001	<0.0001	<0.0001
Diclofop-methyl	0.0001	ppm	<0.0001	<0.0001	<0.0001
Deltamethrin	0.0001	ppm	0.0004 (0.4 ppb)	<0.0001	<0.0001
Thifensulfuron-methyl	0.00001	ppm	<0.00001	<0.00001	<0.00001
Carbathiin	0.0005	ppm	<0.0005	<0.0005	<0.0005
Tribenuron-methyl	0.00001	ppm	<0.00001	<0.00001	<0.00001
Everest (MKH-6562)	0.00001	ppm	<0.00001	0.00001	<0.00001
Lindane (Gamma-BHC)	0.0001	ppm	<0.0001	<0.0001	<0.0001
Clodinafop-propargyl	0.00001	ppm	<0.00001	<0.00001	<0.00001
Linuron	0.0005	ppm	<0.0005	<0.0005	<0.0005
Ethametsulfuron-methyl	0.00001	ppm	<0.00001	<0.00001	<0.00001
Sundance	0.00001	ppm	<0.00001	<0.00001	<0.00001
Carbofuran	0.0005	ppm	<0.0005	<0.0005	<0.0005
Carbaryl	0.0005	ppm	<0.0005	<0.0005	<0.0005
Thiram	0.001	ppm	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001
Fluroxypyr	0.0001	ppm	<0.0001	<0.0001	<0.0001
Clopyralid	0.0001	ppm	<0.0001	<0.0001	<0.0001
Fenoxaprop-p-Ethyl	0.0001	ppm	<0.0001	<0.0001	<0.0001
Dichlorprop	0.0005	ppm	<0.0005	<0.0005	<0.0005
Ethalfluralin	0.0001	ppm	<0.0001	<0.0001	<0.0001
Fluazifop-p-butyl	0.0001	ppm	<0.0001	<0.0001	<0.0001
Quizalifop-ethyl	0.0001	ppm	<0.0001	<0.0001	<0.0001
Imazethapyr	0.0001	ppm	<0.0001	<0.0001	<0.0001
Metribuzin	0.0005	ppm	<0.0005	<0.0005	<0.0005
Propanil	0.0005	ppm	<0.0005	<0.0005	<0.0005
Chlorpyrifos	0.0001	ppm	<0.0001	<0.0001	<0.0001
Malathion	0.0001	ppm	<0.0001	<0.0001	<0.0001
Cyhalothrin-lambda	0.0001	ppm	<0.0001	<0.0001	<0.0001
Chlorothalonil	0.001	ppm	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001
Difenoconazole	0.0001	ppm	<0.0001	<0.0001	<0.0001
Metalaxyl	0.0001	ppm	<0.0001	<0.0001	<0.0001
Tebuconazole	0.0001	ppm	<0.0001	<0.0001	<0.0001
Propiconazole	0.0001	ppm	<0.0001	<0.0001	<0.0001
Diquat	0.001	ppm	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001
Tralkoxydim	0.0002	ppm	<0.0002	<0.0002	<0.0002
Clethodim & Sethoxydim	0.0002	ppm	<0.0002	<0.0002	<0.0002

October 15, 2001 Davidson Leader

A letter to:  
John Nilson, Saskatchewan Minister of Health,

Dear Mr. Nilson:

### **Request #1**

Pure unpolluted water is the basic foundation of everyone's health.

I am writing to respectfully request that you establish a pesticide testing program to help communities and farmers test, identify and preserve sources of pesticide free potable water. We advised you earlier that our Research Foundation was going to start to test the Town of Davidson's water supply and the two RM's public wells for pesticides to try to determine the cause of four cases of infant cancer last year in Davidson.

Saskatchewan uses one- third of the pesticides used in Canada and even though the measurements in the water tests are low at this time, they will no doubt increase as time goes on. Canada does not have any meaningful standards for pesticide pollution in water, food and air just guidelines.

We will be contacting Washington D.C. to find out what their new guidelines are under the Food Quality Protection Act of 1996.

In addition we will be checking with the German guidelines where standards are very stringent. Surprisingly some of the chemical farmers in the Davidson community are not prepared to accept the low measurements of Avadex, Fortress and Decis 5 pesticides found in the Davidson dam.

We have received the results of our test from EnviroTest Laboratories on Oct. 3. We took three samples. The town gets its water from two sources—one is a well 125-150 feet deep a couple miles north of town and the other is a dam just a short distance east of Davidson.

They mix one-third well water with two-thirds dam water.

The third test is from what is known as the airport well about five miles east of town in the RM of Arm River.

We asked the laboratory to test for residues of the 64 pesticides that are sold in Davidson. (You have a copy of the list taken from July 9, 2001 DavidsonLeader.) Several pesticides have the same active ingredients (list enclosed). The list was reduced to 45 active ingredients.

### **Deep Well**

The active ingredient triallate was found in the deep well at levels of 2.9 ppb (parts per billion). The ingredient is in the herbicides Avadex and Fortress. In addition deltamethrin was found in the deep well at 0.4 ppb. It is the active ingredient in the pesticide Decis 5.

### **Davidson Dam**

The active ingredient triallate was also found in the Davidson dam at the same level of 2.9 ppb.

**Airport Well**

The active ingredient triallate was also found in the airport well at a level of 0.6 ppb. As we said before, Avadex and Fortress both contain triallate.

**Request #2**

Would you please advise us on the methodology of testing air and food samples for pesticides? If we are going to find the total exposure of citizens to pesticides, it's necessary to test water, food and air.

The U.S. government passed the *Food Quality Protection Act* in 1996 (enclosed). It sets out procedures to examine total pesticide intake of its citizens.

The Environmental Working Group, 1718 Connecticut Ave. N.W., Washington D.C., has completed a 43- page study on pesticides in tap water in several midwestern states (copy also enclosed). You will note that in several communities pesticide pollution in tap water is as high as 64 times the permissible level.

**Request #3**

Here in Canada we don't have any standards for pesticide safety in water, food and air—only guidelines which are meaningless.

Would you please urge federal Health Minister Allan Rock to take steps immediately to develop meaningful standards that are safe for all ages?

Dr. Allan Cessna of the National Hydrology Water Institute, Saskatoon, told a Davidson audience this summer that the fetus is particularly sensitive during the first three months of pregnancy. Children and respiratory patients are also vulnerable.

If you want to have a healthy population, I think the time is long overdue to seriously consider the effects of pesticide pollution in water, food and air on the health of Saskatchewan citizens. The Blakney and Devine governments tested for some of the pesticides in water in the province.

However, your government discontinued the program in 1991. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss water testing for pesticides in water, food and air at your earliest convenience.

Elmer Laird, president,  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

November 11, 1996 Davidson Leader

Open Letter To:  
Premier Roy Romanow  
Environment Minister Lorne Scott  
Dear Gentlemen:

Re: Water Contamination Problem On The Anton Ranch, Fox Valley, SK

I am writing to request that your government take action immediately to authorize the staff of the Saskatchewan Environment Department to clean up the water contamination problem on the northeast quarter of Section 27-16-24 W3 in the Rural Municipality of Fox Valley. This land is located in the sandhills south of Fox Valley which is an ecologically sensitive area with a 12 to 15 foot water table. There is no doubt from reports that the water contamination of Perry Anton's dugout is coming from the Ocelot's gas compressor plant built in 1988 on the same quarter of land described above. Anton first recognized a discolouring of the dugout water in 1990. Later on, Anton noticed a strange behaviour in his cattle, birth defects and problems with cattle not growing or putting on weight.

By January of 1992 Anton's cattle were dying even after he took them home from the pasture to a different water supply. In December, 1992, Anton hired DarWall Consultants (Wally Hamm) Of Saskatoon. In March, 1993, DarWall's report stated the water in all three dugouts was toxic. A February, 1993, water sample from the new dugout was the most toxic ever submitted to NorWest Labs for MicroTox analysis. Hamm used Ocelot's past studies to condemn the company for the contamination of the dugouts.

The dugout toxicity varies and is the worst when it is ice covered. After being exposed to the air the toxic (sulphide) agent disappears. Finally in March, 1994, Anton and Ocelot agree that WDA Consulting Inc. of Calgary would be employed to investigate the toxicity problem and Ocelot would pay the \$250,000 cost. Anton said "The WDA chemical investigation was done by six labs, all with the same conclusions. Tab 15 and 16 states various hydrocarbons contaminating ground water in my dugouts which my cattle and wildlife are using. Methane, ethane, ethylene, propane, propylene, butylene, iso butane, normal butane, cyclopentane, normal pentane, helium, hydrogen, argon, propanoic acid ester, hexadecanoic acid, octadecanoic acid, benzeneacetic acid and the report also states dimethyldisulphide, molecular sulfur, KCL and more."

In a letter to Graham Mutch, Saskatchewan Environment, on October 15, 1996, Perry Anton said "At our so called hearing with people from Environment and Energy & Mines at the Fox Valley Community Hall on October 10, 1996, it was obvious that you and the others had not spent the time to study or read the \$250,000 study of water contamination on NE 27-16-24 W3 done by WDA Consultants of Calgary, AB. WDA Consultants were proposed, selected- and hired by Ocelot."

Anton went on to say "Graham, you are treating this water contamination problem like it is a private matter between Ocelot and us. This water is of public concern. A person in the environment department should have inclinations and care about the public, environment and the wildlife that drink from contaminated dugouts in the sandhills.

Over the last seven years besides Ocelot and Anton many others have been involved--Saskatchewan Environment Resource Management, Saskatchewan Energy and Mines, Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food, Roper Environmental Engineering Inc., DarWall Consultants, WDA Consulting Inc., Agriculture Canada, Western College of Veterinary Medicine, Saskatchewan Research Council and Mediation Services. The Anton Ranch operated by Perry and Charlotte Anton has five quarter sections of deeded land and 21 quarter sections of leased crown land. Their breeding herd has dropped from 160 to 102. Over the years they have an accumulated debt of \$71,000 for veterinarians, water testing, lawyers and consultants and it is still climbing. Perry, who worked for Ocelot, was laid off in 1994. The Farm Credit Corporation is now threatening to foreclose on some of their land.

Well, Mr. Premier, it is time to act; no more studies are required. Historical records report that Nero fiddled while Rome burned. History will also record that the Romanow government (fiddled) ignored a very serious water contamination problem and the plight of the farm family directly affected. History may also record the defeat of the NDP next election because they neglected environmental problems that they are responsible for in this province.

Sincerely,  
Elmer Laird, President  
Back To The Farm  
Research Foundation

September 1, 1997 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:  
Premier Roy Romanow  
Mr. M. Sonntag, Minister in Charge  
Saskatchewan Water Corporation  
Mr. Alex Banga, Director of Basin  
Operations, SWC

Gentlemen:

Re: 1) Dumping toxic herbicides in the irrigation canal, Broderick to Zehna, eight times a year; and 2) Volumes of water required to service Saskatchewan's mega-hog barn development.

1) An ad by Saskatchewan Water Corporation appears in The Davidson Leader several times a year warning water users of herbicide dumping dates. The ad states the water is safe for irrigation after 24 hours but shouldn't be used for drinking or swimming (bathing, showering). It goes on to say, "Since no other feasible alternative exists to control growth of weeds in canals, they are best controlled with this short lived, widely used registered chemical." The above statement is not factual. "Ditch riders" were used to control weeds in irrigation ditches long before herbicides existed and the Department of Agriculture has had this information since before 1960.

In 1960 or 1961 the Saskatchewan Farmers' Union, to prepare farmers for irrigation in the Outlook area, organized the South Saskatchewan Irrigation Policy Committee to plan and develop irrigation policy for the coming irrigation development from the water that would be provided by Lake Diefenbaker. There were fifteen farmers, two from each of seven SFU Locals from Elbow to Conquest. Ernie Dehm, an Irrigation Engineer, and Dick Lane, economist, represented the Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture. I was SFU District 10 Director at that time and the first chairman of the Irrigation Policy Committee. It was recognized by the provincial government as the official policy committee. For two winters we met for one day a week in the Outlook Ag. Rep. office to study irrigation procedures. The committee went on two tours of the St. Mary's irrigation district in Alberta. Among the many people we talked to were "ditch riders" who were employed to keep the water running through the canals so they wouldn't overflow and be "washed out". The policy committee was assured at that time that the canals would have an embankment wide enough for a ditch rider to drive a vehicle along the embankment to check for obstructions that would stop the flow of water. Since that time technology has developed four-wheel drive half-ton trucks, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) for transportation and "cell telephones" for instant communication. Even more importantly, FarmTec Industrial, Loreburn, SK, has manufactured a "ditch swather" designed to cut the grass and weeds on municipal road allowances. It will even move the hay out of the ditches so it can be cut into silage if you wish. I am sure they could adapt or redesign their equipment to be used for weed and grass control in irrigation ditches if it isn't satisfactory at the present time. If the Saskatchewan government wants to develop new industries or to expand an existing one, this would be a golden opportunity.

2) Volumes of water required to service Saskatchewan's proposed mega-hog barn development. Terry Boehm, Colonsay, SK, and Darrin Qualman, NFU Executive Secretary, Saskatoon, SK, issued a press release on March 27, 1997, expressing concerns about the large volumes of water that would be required to service the mega-hog industry. They said, "*One mega-barn promoter alone, Heartland Livestock Services, a division of Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, plans, by 2004, to build twenty 2400-sol4 operations—which will each produce 50,000 hogs. That's a total of a million hogs. After 2004 Heartland plans to open another twenty operations and increase production by another million hogs annually. For comparison, the total hog production in Saskatchewan was one-million hogs in 1995.*

*Mega-barn promoters down-play environmental problems. However, one pig produces 2.37 times as much waste as a human being. Therefore each 50,000 hog mega-barn will create the equivalent sewage of 120,000-person city and consume 60,000 gallons of water per day. Boehm says, "Barn promoters are placing the raw sewage equivalent of a city of 120,000 people in lagoon, storing it for fourteen months and hoping that it doesn't leak, overflow or seep into the ground water. And they are going, to do this at twenty operations across Saskatchewan. The liquid raw sewage coming from Heartland hog alone will be five times as much as produced by the entire human population of the province."*

Saskatchewan was extremely short of potable water until Gardiner Dam was built. Crown corporations should be conserving water and protecting it from being polluted. They should definitely not be dumping toxic herbicides in potable water supplies. The Environment Minister said that he didn't have a mandate to protect water quality and supplies. In the final analysis the Saskatchewan Water Corporation must be responsible. It's amazing that a government that claims it is interested in the health of its citizens doesn't take steps to conserve water and protect the quality of all of the provinces potable water supplies. There are obviously alternatives to dumping toxic herbicides in canals and British Columbia has developed a method of composting manure from hog barns without using any water.

Elmer Laird, President  
Back To The Farm  
Research Foundation



June 11, 2001 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:

John H. Nilson, Health Minister,  
Bob Allen, CEO, Saskatchewan Cancer Agency

Re: Deliberate Pollution of Canals containing potable water supplies with toxic chemicals by Sask Water Corporation.

The most important thing the Saskatchewan Party has done to date is expose the cover-up by the NDP Coalition Government of the pollution in Saskatchewan water supplies. However, they were unable to expose any figures on pesticide pollution because there aren't any. The Romanow government quit testing for pesticides in 1991. All the while the SaskWater Corporation with the authorization of Saskatchewan Environment continues to deliberately pollute the water in the 85 mile long canal that carries water from the Broderick reservoir to many small communities including Hanley, cottage residences on Blackstrap Reservoir, Bradwell, Allan, Viscount, Gurnsey and Lanigan. The deliberate pollution has been going on for many years. The May 12, 2001 edition of The Davidson Leader carried the following ad by SaskWater that proves that toxic chemicals are being deliberately dumped in potable water supplies.

*Public Notice*

*The Utility Operations Branch of SaskWater will be treating the Saskatoon Southeast Water Supply System (S.S.E.W.S.) canal between the Brighiwater and Blackstrap reservoirs to control aquatic weeds and algae during the 2001 irrigation season. The chemical Magnacide "H", with its active ingredient "Acrolein", will be noticeable in the water by its offensive odor.*

*Treatment dates will be May 7, May 22, June 4, June 18, July 3, July 16, July 20 and August 13, 2001. The canal flow rate may be lowered during treatment so less chemical will be required. The chemical will remain active in the canals for approximately 24 hours and will diminish to non- detectable levels prior to treated water entering the reservoir. Dosages will be similar to last year and the water can be safely used for irrigation with no damage to field crops.*

*Area residents are warned that chemically treated water should not be used for drinking. Treated water may also be harmful to the skin, causing irritation to exposed areas.*

*People are reminded that swimming in the canal is STRICTLY PROHIBITED; swimming in treated water may cause skin irritation.*

*Magnacide "H" can kill fish by suffocation, but it does not accumulate in fish flesh. Fishing in the canal is not permitted.*

*Since no other feasible alternative exists to control the growth of aquatic weeds in canals, they are best controlled with this short-lived, widely used, registered chemical. This water treatment ensures irrigation intakes are free from clogging and adequate flows are maintained in this multi- use system. For more information contact: Allan McMillan, SaskWater, Box 310, Watrous, SK, S0K 4T0. Phone 946-3200.*

The chemical is used to clear the algae out of the canal so the water can run freely. In a telephone conversation with the Information Officer at the Sask Water office

at Watrous I asked “who said the toxic effects of Magnacide “H” disappeared in 24 hours. He said “The chemical company that sells the product”. Personally, I am not prepared to accept this myth and I am amazed that SaskWater and Sask Environment and the water users are. I was chairman of the Policy Committee of the South Saskatchewan Dam in the early 1960s and the plans at that time were to use “ditch riders” to clear any rubble or algae out of the canals so the water would not flow over the banks and wash out the canals. The information Officer assures me that it would be an impossible task for ditch riders today. Back in the era of 1987-1989 Dr. Roy Cullimore, micro-biologist, University of Regina and head of the Regina Water Institute, tried to get research money to harvest algae out of the fishing lakes to provide the Buffalo Pound Water Treatment Plant (it supplies both Regina and Moose Jaw with their water supply) with a supply of clean water to reduce Trihalomethanes and Chlorophenolic pollution. Surely in this age of science and technology when we have had people in space for 30 years it is possible to design a simple piece of equipment that will remove algae from canals.

We have come to the conclusion that if citizens want unpolluted food, water and air they are going to have to take steps to clean up their environment.

At a meeting of the Back To the Farm Research Foundation on June 5, 2001 we decided that we are going to start testing water supplies for chemical residues. We will start with the Davidson Dam and work with town, municipal councils or community organizations to share the cost. We would appreciate it if you would supply us with a list of accredited laboratories to send the samples to. The provincial laboratory that is operated by the Health Department is relatively new in the field of pesticide testing and we are not sure it is accredited for this work yet. We hope you will supply the list of accredited laboratories soon so we can begin our work. We plan on sending all samples to at least two labs for verification. It is to be hoped that citizens in other communities take similar action.

Elmer Laird, president,  
Back To the Farm  
Research Foundation

October 14, 2002 Davidson Leader

**Find safe sources of drinking water for Saskatchewan citizens**

Open letter to:

The Hon. Lorne Calvert, Premier of Saskatchewan

The Hon. John Nilson, Provincial Health Minister

Gentlemen:

Re: Launch a program to find safe sources of drinking water for Saskatchewan citizens

On Friday, October 4, 2002, Dr. Hans Peterson, Executive Director of the Safe Drinking Water Foundation, in a speech to the "Just Add Water" conference told participants at the Sheraton Cavalier Hotel, Saskatoon, that Canada's drinking water supply causes 23 per cent of the illnesses in Canada. He also reported that the water supply in Holland caused 2.5 per cent of the illnesses in that country. He emphasized that the Canadian figures were based mainly on urban statistics and there were no accurate statistics for rural Canada or native reserves where water quality was of a much lower standard.

About 330 people attended the one and a half-day conference. They traveled all the way from Ontario through to British Columbia. The conference was sponsored by the Centre for Studies in Agriculture, Law and Environment (U of S), Partners for the Saskatchewan River Basin and the Saskatchewan Environmental Society.

Peterson said, "In 2001, Saskatchewan Water Corporation assessed rural water treatment plants across Saskatchewan. Even though its assessment was based on "selection" of health parameters, it found that 90 percent could not consistently meet these guidelines.

Had they included one more key component, trihalomethanes (carcinogenic compounds formed during chlorination of water), they would have been forced to conclude that close to 100 per cent of rural water treatment plants in Saskatchewan cannot consistently meet the guidelines. Peterson did not supply any numbers of community water treatment plants but Other sources indicate that there are about 520-530.

No mention was made of either farm wells or dugouts. There are about 45,000 - 50,000 farmers in Saskatchewan. I am sure that at least 40,000 farms have wells or dugouts for their water supply and their own water treatment plants. Apparently farm systems were not included in the study.

There was very little mention of pesticides in our water supply at the conference. However, for several years Dr. Allan Cessna with the National Hydrology Water Institute, Saskatoon, has been reporting that all the surface water and one third of the deep wells he has tested in Saskatchewan (and that is his job) has been polluted with herbicides.

Saskatchewan relies heavily on surface water. Seven of the major cities including Regina, Moose Jaw, Saskatoon, North Battleford and Prince Albert rely on surface water for a potable water supply. There wasn't information on whether or not urban treatment plants remove pesticides.

It was also obvious that both federal and provincial government employees at the conference were under pressure not to discuss pesticides in the water. The reason, as you are well aware, is because both governments have policies to promote chemical agriculture only. Their jobs would be in jeopardy if they did.

Water supplies in the future will be very precious. The keynote speaker at the conference was Dr. David W. Schindler, Killam Memorial Professor, University of Alberta. He spoke on the cumulative effects of climate change and other human activity on the freshwaters of the Canadian prairies. He forecast warmer temperatures which means more evaporation. This will lead to reduced water supplies.

The banquet speaker was CBC broadcaster Susan Ormiston. She showed a CBC program called "Troubled Waters" that she moderated a year ago. In the question period I raised the question of human addiction to pesticides of farmers, urban homeowners and public administrators. I told her that agricultural, chemical or pesticide addiction could be just as difficult to fight as an addiction to liquor, tobacco or drugs. I also mentioned that the large advertising budgets of chemical companies enforces pesticide use or helps persuade the farmer or homeowner who suffers from it to justify the continued use of pesticides. She suggested treating agriculture chemical addictions in a humane way like other addictions.

The fact is, gentlemen, pesticides are obsolete. A year ago The Western Producer reported that 22 weeds are immune to herbicides in Canada. Most authorities agree that even wild oats is one of them. (N.B. There was no report on food pollution in relation to illnesses.)

About a year ago when we were going to test the Davidson water supply for pesticides, Mr. Nilson told me in a letter that the provincial laboratory was not an accredited laboratory. I hope it soon receives that status.

Our water testing program last year cost \$2,700 per test for the 64 pesticides that are marketed at Davidson. Individual farmers and many communities cannot afford the cost of the testing program on water supplies. However, in the beginning the CCF, and the NDP were considered a Socialist party. Perhaps you could revive the spirit of Socialism for a water testing program and provide free or very minimal provincial lab charges.

I am writing to ask you to:

1) launch a campaign to find safe drinking water for all Saskatchewan citizens. To do this you will have to recognize the need for a safe, unpolluted water supply and then establish free or greatly reduced testing fees at the provincial laboratory for testing all farm and community potable water supplies so we can involve all citizens in the campaign.

2) if we can find sources of safe water, citizens will start cleaning up all our water sources. Clean unpolluted water is not just important for people, it is also important for domestic animals, poultry, wildlife and wild birds. Saskatchewan citizens are paying over \$2000 per capita for health care. If we could find safe drinking water for everyone it would reduce health care cost \$400,000,000.

I hope you give this matter your immediate attention, and I would like to meet with you to discuss the program at your convenience. I am proud to come from a town that uses all their waste water for irrigation purposes.

Twenty nine towns in the province use all or some of their waste water for irrigation. Davidson's polluted waste water is not dumped into someone else's drinking water. In fact you might also consider establishing a sewerage corporation to promote both safe water and water conservation. Davidson had an excellent barley crop which was cut far feed on their sewage irrigation project.

Remember gentlemen, the longer you put off the campaign, the less water we will have and the more pollutants we will have in it.

Elmer Laird, President  
The Back to The Farm  
Research Foundation

November 4, 2002 Davidson Leader

**SOD request identification of safe sources of drinking water from government**

Open letter to:

The Hon. Lorne Calvert, Premier

The Hon. John Nilson, Minister of Health

The Hon. Clay Serby, Minister of Agriculture Province of Saskatchewan

Dear Gentlemen,

RE: Request by Saskatchewan Organic Directorate (SOD) to provincial government to identify safe sources of drinking water in Saskatchewan

I am pleased to inform you that the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate (umbrella organization for all certified organic farmers in Saskatchewan) at their regular meeting of the Board of Directors at Davidson, Sask., on Oct. 26, 2002, passed the following resolution unanimously. Whereas Dr. Hanz Peterson, executive director of the Safe Drinking Water Foundation reports that 23 per cent of illnesses in Canada are caused by water pollution and only 2.5 per cent in Holland.

Therefore be it resolved that we ask the Saskatchewan government to launch a campaign to identify safe sources of drinking water in Saskatchewan.

Dr. Allan Cessna, National Hydrology Water Institute reports that all surface waters he has tested and one third of the deep wells are polluted with herbicides, many with high levels. However, there is no report available on what per cent of illnesses in Saskatchewan are caused by food or air pollution particularly from pesticides. Currently it is costing us over \$2000 a year for Medicare. Certified organic farmers are working to clean up the environment. If we could reduce the water causing illnesses from 23 percent down to Holland's level of 2.3, it would save us over \$400 per capita or over \$400,000,000 per year.

I would like to draw your attention to the fact that certified organic farmers are not contributing to the pesticide pollution of our food, air and water.

However, the government is promoting it. You continue to promote chemical agriculture only, in fact, there is very little energy spent by your government in promoting organic farming. You continue to subsidize hog factories with big bucks that will never produce certified organic pork, in fact they are an environmental threat to our already polluted water, they are a health hazard to hog factory employees who work there and sadly they produce a very low quality of pork that is often polluted with antibiotics and growth hormones. It is surprising that you continue promoting these hog factories after the experience the Saskatchewan government had at North Battleford and the Ontario government had at Walkerton.

If you were concerned about the environment you would subsidize hog houses and feed lots that compost animal manure and spread it on the land.

In addition to cleaning up the environment the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate (SOD) are attempting to prevent further pollution of farm lands by genetically engineered canola.

On Jan. 10, 2002, (as you are well aware) SOD launched a class action suit against the transnational corporations Monsanto and Adventis for:

1. Compensation for damages caused by their genetically engineered canola to farmers crops and markets in Sask. and
2. To get an injunction to prevent Monsanto from introducing their genetically engineered wheat in Saskatchewan.

It's unfortunate that the Saskatchewan government is not concerned about the loss of markets and prices the introduction of genetically engineered wheat would cause and the financial destruction of our rural economy. It is also unfortunate the Saskatchewan government does not have any appreciation for the research facilities (federal, provincial and university) that we had before the introduction of the Plant Breeders Rights Act in 1991 by the Mulroney government. Until then, we had an excellent system that did excellent work for agriculture, e.g. in wheat they developed rust resistant varieties, sawfly resistant varieties, varieties that yielded more and matured in a shorter length of time and adapted them to the many drought years we have experienced in Saskatchewan.

In conclusion, gentlemen, I am pleased the Premier so far is supporting the Kyoto accord. It is unfortunate you are concerned about the cost and not the benefits of Kyoto. I think Kyoto will create a great savings for Saskatchewan citizens and will create many new jobs in Saskatchewan. With Kyoto we will move to self-sufficient communities, use energy efficient straw bale solar-heated green houses to produce our food the year round and when we get rid of pesticides and clean up the environment the pollution will very rapidly decrease. Millions of people from polluted communities are looking for an environmentally safe place to live. We would welcome an opportunity to meet with you to discuss agricultural policies and programs after Kyoto.

Elmer Laird, president  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

# THE PROVINCIAL HEALTH SYSTEM AND THE ENVIRONMENT

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January 29, 1996

Open Letter to:  
The Honourable Doug Young  
Federal Minister in Charge of  
Canada Pension Plan  
Human Resources Development  
Canada  
Ottawa, Ontario

Dear Sir,

Environmental factors are not being considered by “baby boomers” and fellow travellers when they are forecasting that the Canada Pension Plan will go bankrupt early in the next century. They are basing their statistics on the presumption they will live as long as the 80 to 90 year old senior citizens living today. Today’s seniors from the time of conception, whether in a bed, haystack or on virgin prairie were exposed only to natural fibres, unpolluted water, food and air. They enjoyed a relatively healthy lifestyle until they were at least 30 to 35 years old. The children of today who may be conceived on a foam rubber mattress, chesterfield, automobile seat or in a test tube are exposed to toxic fumes, synthetic fibres, polluted water, air and food immediately. In fact, their parents will have lived in a polluted environment most of their lives. The “baby boomers” are sort of in-between, most of them will have been exposed to ever increasing amounts of pollution over the last forty years. Pollution is attacking all our immune systems and debilitating diseases are rapidly increasing.

Disease resistance is building up to antibiotics and unless action is taken immediately to clean up the environment “baby boomers” may reach pension age with great difficulty.

The nation was exposed to a one sided view on the potential collapse of the Canada Pension Plan on Friday evening, January 19, 1996. Hana Gartner, host of CBCs “Magazine” following the “National”, interviewed Warren Baldwin, a financial planner, and Gail Vaz-Oxlade, author of the “Golden Rules Of Pension Protection” They concluded the pension plan would collapse early in the next century and no one ever mentioned the disastrous effects of environmental pollution on the life expectancy of Canadian citizens.

There is little doubt life expectancy will shorten if we don’t clean up the environment. In fact, there is a greater risk the Canadian Health Program will go bankrupt before Canada Pension Plan does.



Pesticides have been far more hazardous than we have been led to believe. Journalist Rupert Jannasch in an article entitled "The Case Of The Missing Pesticides" in the magazine "Rural Delivery" published in Liverpool, Nova Scotia, said:

*"Pesticide residues and assumptions about their safety have long been at the core of debates over food quality. Now, it seems the quantity of pesticide residues present in agricultural foods may have been severely underestimated. There is even reason to question whether scientists ever knew how to properly find and measure them."*

*Contemporary tests for pesticide residues use organic solvents to dissolve and extract chemicals found on a food product. The extracted chemicals are then identified and analyzed for quantity and quality using elaborate laboratory techniques.*

*Despite there being internationally accepted methods, researchers like Dr. Shahanzut Kahn with the Centre for Land and Biological resources Research at Agriculture Canada, have never been quite able to account for all the pesticides they knew were applied to a particular crop. It was as if by some twist of nature these chemical substances had vanished. Apparently, those responsible for regulating food safely decided what we did not know would not hurt us."*

Jannasch quotes Dr. Kahn as saying "Scientists have grown increasingly uncomfortable with the notion that these pesticides had packed their bags and disappeared leaving no forwarding address."

Jannasch said:

*"Kahn decided to trace the whereabouts of these missing agents by tagging pesticides with a radioactive isotope that could be detected when the corn kernels were later analyzed for residues.*

*What he and his colleagues found was that from 10 to 93 per cent of pesticide residues had been going undetected using the old solvent method."*

Weeds and pests have built up a resistance to herbicides and pesticides over the years. Even the prairie departments of agriculture say they are no longer a first line of defence against weeds and pests. It is rather ironic that Federal Agriculture is admitting pesticides are far more toxic than previously reported before they had lost their so-called usefulness. I sincerely hope, Mr. Minister, that you will leave the Canada Pension Plan as is and work with the New Ministers of Health and Environment to provide a healthy lifestyle and environment for all Canadians. Otherwise, there will be a surplus accumulation in the Canada Pension Plan early in the next century.

Sincerely,  
Elmer Laird

March 29, 2004 Davidson Leader

### **Healthy environment will resolve Medicare crisis**

Open letter to:

The Davidson Leader readers and their neighbours (part 2)

Re: Will money cure or resolve the Medicare crisis?

It very likely would if governments provided leadership to clean up the environment and produce certified organic healthy nutritious food. Obviously, they are not going to do it so it is up to us. However, both provincial and federal governments continue to promote chemical agriculture only and our food, water and air are becoming increasingly more polluted. A news item on the March 24, 2004 CBC Radio's News at Noon reported that a United Nations report issued at that time was warning people around the world that the nutrition in our food has dropped to such an extent that we have to look to other sources for nutrition. Here on the prairie it has been almost a hundred years since homesteaders started to plow the prairie soil. Unfortunately, for a great number of reasons that would probably fill a book, our soil has been badly eroded by wind and water caused by the wrong tillage and farming practices and polluted with chemical fertilizers and pesticides. If we continue as we are our soil will become completely unproductive. In the last one hundred years many mistakes have been made. Unfortunately, we can't continue to make the same mistakes for the next 100 years or this will be a desert that won't even support wildlife. The book entitled *Our Plundered Planet* by Fairfield Osburn was published by Little Brown and Company (Canada) Limited in 1948. That is 56 years ago. IC. Nollet, Saskatchewan's Minister of Agriculture gave copies to all Rural Municipal councillors and reeves in Saskatchewan in about 1949 - 1950, Apparently, they didn't read it.

The book describes how at one time the Sahara Desert was a fertile plain. It's hard to believe but the evidence is in the book. We have had over 50 years since the book was published to turn things around and start practising good soil conservation. Except in a few instances we haven't done it. Members of the Back to the Farm Research Foundation certainly don't have all the answers but we have made a start. Elsewhere on this page you will find our policies and objectives for our research and demonstration farm. It is entitled Homestead #2.

#### Homestead #2

Unfortunately we haven't made a success of Homestead #1 over the last hundred years. I believe if we don't start Homestead #2 soon, and by following the general policies we have set out in Homestead #2 we will also have a desert here long before the turn of the next century.

I don't think we should think the change will be difficult or impossible. There is an old saying, if there is a will there is a way. Personally, I am looking forward to the challenge. It is obvious the governments are not going to provide the leadership. It will be up to us. I know from experience of working with groups of organic farmers there is a

team spirit where we enjoy working together. We who occupy the land and rural communities will have to make a start. I am convinced that if we start cleaning up the environment and revitalizing the soil many of the people who are tempted to leave the province will stay and help us.

In addition, many more who are looking for a clean environment and healthy nutritious food will move here and we will rapidly grow the population in terms far exceeding what the politicians are talking about. In addition we will regain control of our farms from transnational corporations control and enjoy healthy lifestyle for our families. I am looking forward to Homestead #2.

March 22, 2004 Davidson Leader

**Clean environment key to health care**Open letter to: *The Davidson Leader* readers and their neighbours (Part 1)

Re: Will money cure or resolve the Medicare crisis?

There is little doubt that Canadians are in a health care crisis, media reports lineups or waiting lists are getting longer every day. Saskatchewan has some of the longest. *The Leader Post* recently reported that a Regina man waited for seven months for a biopsy to determine if he had prostate cancer. However, as a result of waiting, the cancer had moved into his bones and his survival was very much in doubt. Money doesn't seem to be the problem. We have a shortage of trained people. Both federal and provincial governments have made efforts to solve the crisis and have been unable to. This means that we the citizens have to make decisions particularly about cleaning up the environment, improving air and water quality and providing Saskatchewan and Canadian citizens with certified organic food.

An article on page three in the March 4, 2004 edition of *The Leader Post*, by Canadian Press entitled Man-made chemicals blamed for soaring cancer numbers, it said: "Manmade chemicals in air, water, food and the workplace are largely to blame for a devastating cancer epidemic which will strike 41 per cent of Canadian males and 38 per cent of females, says a study released Wednesday.

Genetics and lifestyle factors such as smoking and diet can't explain the soaring cancer rates of recent decades, says the report by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

From 1970 to 1998, the incidence of the dreaded disease increased by 35 per cent for men and 27 per cent for women after the effects of population aging have been discounted, say authors Lissa Donner and Robert Chernomas.

When lung cancers are removed from the statistics, the rates still increased by 23.9 per cent for males and 17.1 per cent for females over the period.

The toll is more dramatic when considered over a longer time. In 1921 cancer killed 6.6 per cent of males and 8.6 per cent of females, but now the death rate has risen to 27.4 per cent for men and 23.1 per cent for women, says the report.

There has been a great deal of controversy about the role of environmental contaminants in cancer, and mainstream medical organizations have tended to downplay their importance.

The Canadian Cancer Society estimates that only five per cent of cancers can be directly linked to contaminants in the environment, which would represent about 6,400 cases a year in Canada.

But dissidents such as U.S. scientist Samuel Epstein, author of several books on cancer, say 80 to 90 per cent of human cancer is determined environmentally.

Authors Donner and Chernomas say the medical profession is fixated on screening, diagnosis and damage control rather than prevention.

Mainstream medicine places the blame for cancer on lifestyle and genetics — and emphasizes research into changes at the individual level. It identifies symptoms and treats them, while largely ignoring the root causes of disease.

We believe that successful cancer prevention requires a very different approach.

They note that more than 18 million kilograms of known carcinogens were released into the Canadian environment in 2001, according to the federal government's National Pollutant Release Inventory.

Donner conceded in an interview that many carcinogenic chemicals are useful and would be hard to replace. For example, chlorine is vital in water treatment, but can interact with organic materials to form carcinogenic chemicals known as trihalomethanes." Paris, France, replaced chlorine ten years ago with an environmentally friendly water treatment.

Here in Canada, the powerful transnational drug and chemical companies are selling us large volumes of pesticides that are polluting our environment and food, and cause a variety of illnesses including cancer. They are also selling us large volumes of drugs to try to make us well. It is obvious the polluting side is winning.

Last year, I wrote three letters to the federal Romanow commission on health care, recommending that he recommend that pure unpolluted air and water and certified organic food should be the foundation of Medicare. However, he rejected the proposal. For a long time I couldn't figure out why I would get letters of rejection by some public relations person on his staff and signed by Romanow rejecting my proposal. Finally it dawned on me the reason for the rejection was the fact that we have a very powerful chemical lobby that would do everything to discredit his study if he accepted my recommendation and published it. Here in Saskatchewan, I have on good authority, that we have the highest rate of breast cancer and cervical cancer and the second highest rate of prostate cancer in Canada. We use one-third of the pesticides used in Canada.

The reason I am addressing this letter to the readers of *The Davidson Leader* and their neighbours is to show you that all the government efforts to save Medicare are failing and political promises of more money are not going to solve the problem. It is up to us, the rural citizens to rebuild the foundation of Medicare.

When Medicare was introduced by the Douglas government in 1962, it was built on a foundation of healthy living because our air, water, and food was not nearly as polluted with pesticides as it is now. We only had pesticides for 10 to 12 years. Even then, many farmers didn't move into chemical farming very quickly and some never did. So, water, food and air were far less polluted then. Today we are in the other extreme. We are using larger quantities of pesticides every year. Many of the weeds today are resistant to pesticides. Dr. Allan Cesna, Federal Environment, Saskatoon, says that all Saskatchewan's surface water is polluted with herbicides and one-third of the deep wells. Dr. Fritz Balzer, a German scientist I met last winter in Cuba, reports that his scientific studies show that organically produced food is more nutritious than chemically produced food. I think we all know that good nutrition is the foundation to good health. Dr. Roy Cullimore, micro-biologist, University of Regina, reports that pesticides and some fertilizers destroy the bacteria in the soil.

I know that many of the mothers and grandmothers who may read this article are very concerned about the kind of polluted world their children and grandchildren are growing up in. Saskatchewan pioneers and the citizens who followed them have a long

and successful history of working together to solve their common problems. This is the time to start. I know we can do it. Market prices for chemically raised food are very low and very high for organically raised food. I have been an organic farmer for 35 years and I have enjoyed every minute of it. It is a challenge that really makes life interesting. I had my 80th birthday on Jan. 19 and I am proud of the fact that I haven't polluted our soil and environment with toxic pesticides for the last 35 years.

I hope you, the reader, will be able to feel that kind of pride when you reach 80.

Elmer Laird, president  
Back To The Farm Research Foundation

## HEALTH POLICY

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April 17, 2000 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:

The Hon. Dwain Lingenfelter, Deputy Premier and Saskatchewan's Minister of Agriculture; Louise Simmard, chief executive officer, Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations.

Re: Establishing a Royal Commission to determine how much Canadian toxic chemical agriculture policies cost national Medicare in dollars and illness.

Mr. Lingenfelter and Ms. Simmard,

You are husband and wife, you share the same home and the same family, very likely sleep in the same bed, most married couples do. However, when you go out the door of your home every morning that is where your unity of purpose ends. You, Mr. Lingenfelter, head for your office to promote chemical agriculture that has polluted our Saskatchewan air, water and food with toxic agriculture chemicals for 50 years (Saskatchewan is the largest user of agriculture pesticides in Canada). You, Ms. Simmard head for your office to attempt to salvage our national Medicare program. It is true that Saskatchewan's program is your main concern but it will not likely survive without the national Medicare program. Unfortunately you symbolize what 45 or 50 thousand farmers and a large number of agricultural chemical marketers and distributors will be doing all spring, summer and fall. The husband goes out to chemical farm or distribute chemicals and the wife's priority is the health of their children.

Everyone says we are having a health care crisis, but it is more than that—the system is in shambles. Our national Medicare program continues to go rapidly down the road to disaster because of compartmentalized thinking by all government departments. On one hand we have federal and provincial Departments of Agriculture promoting chemical agriculture only and the departments of health failing to recognize the policies the Department of Agriculture promotes are polluting our air, water and food with toxic agriculture chemicals. Spraying season lasts seven months of the year and there is in excess of one million 20-litre containers of toxic chemicals used in Saskatchewan every year.

Transnational chemical and drug companies are reaping large financial benefits from the conflict between agriculture and health while the departments of environment "monitor" what is going on and do nothing about it, probably because they have only been on the scene for less than 30 years and have no political clout. It is obvious politicians and the media don't understand why they (environment) are here. Transnational drug and chemical companies with the support and advice of the departments of agriculture sell great volumes of toxic herbicides, pesticides and fungicides every year that make us sick and destroy our immune systems that protect our

health. Meanwhile the departments of health, through the Medicare system, promotes the sale of great volumes of drugs (some are toxic if not used properly) in an attempt to make us well. Nationally, the drug and chemical lobbies with large advertising budgets have us on a treadmill and we don't seem to want to get off or we don't know how.

Our Back To The Farm Research Foundation has over the years attempted to convince the Saskatchewan government to change its structure. We have recommended that the Department of Health be recognized as a "senior" portfolio and the departments of agriculture and environment be "junior" portfolios responsible to the Department of Health. The Department of Health would have the authority to review all the policies and programs of agriculture and environment to make sure they support good health care principles. However, to date no one has listened.

Here in Saskatchewan we are very casual about pesticide poisonings and deaths. Occupational Health and Safety keeps statistics on all types of farm injuries but does not keep any statistics on pesticide poisonings or deaths.

Agriculture chemicals are obsolete but high-pressure sales tactics are promoting and increasing their sales. About 15 years ago geneticists Dr. Naylor and Dr. Jana from the University of Saskatchewan were collecting wild oat samples on my organic farm to compare them to wild oat samples from chemical farms. They reported in the scientific journal at the time that the wild oats (which are considered a weed but make very nutritious oatmeal) were building up a resistance to herbicides.

Well, it has happened. Many areas of the prairies are now reporting that wild oats are completely resistant to herbicides. Other weeds (and also pests) are practically resistant, larger volumes of herbicides and pesticides are used which cost more, pollute the air, water and food more and as a result of the high cost of agriculture chemicals and fertilizers and low grain and oilseed prices, farmers are going bankrupt. All the while the drug and chemical business flourishes and the national health care crisis rapidly increases and more people are ill.

Last week a Saskatoon lawyer who handles farm bankruptcies told me the main reason farmers are going bankrupt or losing their farms is because they can't pay their chemical bills. Farmers are asking federal and provincial governments for "bailouts" which means that consumers or taxpayers (farmers are consumers too) will have to foot the bill. The time is long overdue that the taxpayer should pay in silence. If consumers or taxpayers contribute to the farm bailout, then they should start a revolution to protect their health and demand that farmers stop polluting our environment with toxic agriculture chemicals. And furthermore, they should demand that farmers produce the most healthy, nutritious food that is possible to produce. The federal health protection branch is impudent on this issue. If consumers take action immediately, it might save our health care program, but that is the only method left for Canadians.

Well, Mr. Lingenfelter, you want to be the next Premier of Saskatchewan, and I am sure you have your wife's support. The question to you is—are you going to continue supporting the "status quo" or are you going to demonstrate leadership now that will get us out of this polluted environment and reduce health costs? If you don't I am sure the next premier will and I doubt if it will be you.

Elmer Laird, president  
Back to the Farm Research Foundation



July 23, 2001 Davidson Leader

### Presentation to Standing Committee on Health Care

I had sincerely hoped that some individual or organization would draw your attention to the fact that if any Medicare program is going to survive and succeed it must be built on a foundation of supplying all citizens with pure, unpolluted water, an adequate supply of certified organic food, clean air and a clean environment, otherwise it is doomed to failure. The media haven't reported on anyone taking that position in their presentations to date. Unfortunately NDP health, agriculture and environment policies do not support a successful health-care system. Our concern is about what isn't in the recommendations about nutrition, environment, health and agriculture.

### **Support for the family farm policy abandoned**

For about 50 years the Douglas and Lloyd CCF, the Thatcher Liberals, the Blakney NDP and the Devine Conservative governments supported the family farm as a basic and fundamental system of agriculture production.

However, it is obvious the Romanow government abandoned the NDP "family arm" policy immediately after it was elected in 1991. Unfortunately, all provincial and federal political parties we have today have abandoned their support of the family farm as the basic unit of production. Obviously, they are all waiting on the transnational drug and chemical companies to take over agriculture.

### **Strategic withdrawal**

Strategic withdrawal is the unwritten ND1' policy that applies to rural areas of Saskatchewan and family farms today. It is a military term that is used when an army has occupied a territory it doesn't want and is planning to get out. The closing of 52 rural hospitals in the NDP's first term of office was the start of their strategic withdrawal, then the destruction of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, the largest grain handling co-operative in the world was made into a corporation doomed to failure without a vote of the farm members.

As a result many small towns lost their grain elevators and other services and provincial highways were destroyed and continue to be destroyed by using heavy trucks to haul long distances to inland terminals.

Agriculture Minister Eric Upshall destroyed the provincial hog marketing board and the province has spent \$30 to \$40 million financing corporate hog factories that pollute the air (and may pollute the water) in rural areas and make them unlivable.

Environmental regulations were weakened to permit the building of the hog barns and labour laws were eliminated completely so they do not apply to hog barn workers. The hogs are fed a regular diet of antibiotics to keep them alive until it is time to slaughter them. They are also fed on growth hormones. Studies show that hog factory workers have an average working life of seven years before they will suffer irreversible lung damage, five years if they smoke. Many other services are being cutback as the rural

population declines. The Fyke Commission's recommendations to close 40 hospitals are just one more step in the strategic withdrawal policy from rural areas.

The wisdom (or lack of it) of the back room NDP planners is the fact that they believe that when corporations take over family farms governments will no longer be required or responsible to supply services to rural areas including Medicare. The corporations will take over the responsibility for the health and well-being of their employees.

### **Who will pay the price?**

Everyone who continues to live in Saskatchewan will pay the price of having more polluted food, water, air and more illness and higher health costs until the national Medicare program goes bankrupt. When the transnational corporations take control of agriculture they will use large volumes of chemicals to produce food that will pollute the soil, water, air and food and they will sell large volumes of drugs to make us well.

It is true that Premier Calvert has appointed Pat Atkinson as Minister of Rural Revitalization. However, the NDP continue to support corporate farming. The only thing left to protect family farmers from corporate take over is the Saskatchewan Farm Security Act.

### **Pure unpolluted water is the foundation of any health-care program**

Pesticides (herbicides, insecticides and fungicides) have been used in this province for over 50 years. In the beginning there was 2,4-D for weed control and Alderin and Deldrin for grasshopper control (both Alderin and Deldrin contained DDT). Today there are 64 pesticides offered for sale in the Davidson district.

The 358-page Crop Protection Guide produced by Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food lists a total of 110 pesticides and their active ingredients for use in Saskatchewan.

They do not list the human and environmental hazards of the pesticides for two obvious reasons: 1. We have a very strong transnational drug and chemical lobby and 2. Both federal and provincial departments of agriculture have policies to promote chemical agriculture. In 2000 Saskatchewan spent 0.48 per cent of its agriculture budget on organic agriculture. Saskatchewan is the largest user of pesticides in Canada. In the beginning herbicide spraying lasted for about two weeks in June and we sprayed for grasshoppers the years there was an infestation. Today spraying season lasts seven months a year and we have more sophisticated equipment that is capable of spraying much larger volumes.

Pesticides were actually developed for biological warfare in the first and second world wars. However, someone decided to adapt them to peace time uses. Very recently the Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that municipalities have the right to ban pesticides in their own communities. The City of Halifax has a bylaw to phase them out and recent media reports indicate the City of Toronto is introducing a by-law to phase out pesticides in two years.

The cancer, chemical and drug industries are all growth industries in both Saskatchewan and Canada. The June 2001 edition of *Alive*, the Canadian Journal of Health and Nutrition, reports an estimated 2,300 will die of cancer in Saskatchewan this year and it is expected there will be 4,500 new cancer cases. The province suffers from

the highest rate of leukemia deaths among women and the second highest rate of prostate cancer in men in Canada.

Here at Davidson we have had four cases of infant cancer in the last year, one infant was born with cancer. I wrote to Saskatchewan Health Minister John Nilson and asked him to investigate. He asked the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency to investigate.

They established the cancer cluster committee, but refused to investigate because all three infants had different kinds of cancer (one family moved to Weyburn).

At about the same time the Cancer Cluster Committee refused to investigate the three infant cancer cases. The Saskatchewan Party exposed the “water quality” cover up by Saskatchewan Environment Resource Management and SaskWater.

Davidson was one of the 119 communities singled out in a list of communities that had problems treating its drinking water. Davidson’s problem was excessive trihalomethanes found in the water.

Trihalomethanes are created by mixing chlorine and organic matter in the water for the purpose of purification. Scientists have known for at least 20 years that trihalomethanes cause cancer.

Unfortunately the Saskatchewan Party only exposed part of the cover-up of water quality. The Blakney NDP and the Devine Conservative governments provided grants to the Saskatchewan Research Council to test community water supplies for pesticides (herbicides, insecticides and fungicides). The Romanow government, elected in 1991, stopped testing immediately after the election. Saskatchewan community water supplies have not been tested for 10 years.

When we received notice of the fact the Cancer Cluster Committee refused to investigate the infant cancer cases our only choice was to do our own test for pesticides. Sixty-four pesticides are sold in this community and we are arranging with private laboratories to test the water samples.

*The Crop Protection Guide 2001* lists 110 pesticides for use in Saskatchewan. It also lists their active ingredients. However, it doesn’t list the health effects of the active ingredients on people and the environment. After 50 years of using pesticides everyone should know the toxicity of all products, whether they cause cancer, nervous disorders, birth defects or a multitude of other health problems.

Herbicides are obsolete, the *Western Producer* reported last winter that 22 weeds in Canada are resistant to herbicides, bugs are also building up an immunity to insecticides, there are many biological controls for pests and weeds but both the federal and the provincial governments completely ignore them.

The most recent report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development published in May 2000 entitled *Pesticides: Making the Right Choice for Protection of Health and the Environment* recommends federal subsidies to chemical farmers to make the transition to organic farming.

It also points out the “vulnerability of children to pesticide residues.” There is certainly a lot of circumstantial evidence that cancer is caused by pesticide polluted air, food and water.

To be continued next week.

July 30, 2001 Davidson Leader

Presentation to the Standing Committee on Health Care

Part 2 Continued from The Davidson Leader, July 23, 2001

**Closing 40 rural hospitals - will force seniors and disabled people to move to the cities**

Closing 40 more hospitals will eliminate many doctors from rural areas. Many small towns do not have dependable daily bus service to cities. Many seniors are very uncomfortable driving on busy highways to cities or in city traffic. Sons and daughters of Saskatchewan pioneer homestead era who have decided to retire in small town Saskatchewan will be unable to stay because of the lack of access to medical facilities. Many have comfortable homes in small towns now but there will be very little sale value of their present dwelling and they will be headed for low-income apartments in the cities. Furthermore, in many cases, they will leave their families behind. They will be in a foreign and unfamiliar environment.

**Abundant supplies of nutritious certified organic (unpolluted) food is the other part of the foundation for a national Medicare program**

Many people comment on the large number of seniors who are enjoying a very long life. However, no one ever asks why. Perhaps the Fyke Commission should have looked backward to plan for the future success of Medicare.

The era I would like to draw your attention to is the 1930s and earlier, going back to the diet of the early homesteaders. I can only speak of my own experience. We had a wonderful healthy diet—you couldn't go wrong. We had fresh milk, butter and cottage cheese all year. We didn't have any refrigeration so if the milk went sour we gave it to the pigs or made cottage cheese. We had fresh eggs three times a day all summer. However, the chicken house was too cold in the winter and the chickens wouldn't lay eggs. We had chicken on Sunday if company came. We had a variety of vegetables (potatoes, carrots, turnips, - parsnips) in the root cellar in the basement to eat all winter. My mother canned string beans and made beet, tomato and onion pickles with a minimum amount of vinegar and salt as preservatives. In the fall we butchered beef or pork after it froze up in the fall and then buried it in the wheat bin so it wouldn't thaw out on warm days in the winter.

We had a wonderful diet of fresh vegetables and wild fruits in the summertime. When I think back we didn't have any money for junk foods, pop or candy. Our main drink as children was fresh milk, hot chocolate or water. My parents drank tea or coffee at mealtime. There weren't any coffee shops available. I probably had a small bottle of pop or an ice cream cone twice a year.

We couldn't go wrong prior to 1940. We didn't have any pesticides polluting our food, water and air. We didn't have any preservatives that interfered or restricted the nutrition in the soil getting to the food on the table. This was the kind of a food supply

where you couldn't go wrong and it should be the foundation for our national health care program today.

For example, the only certified organic unpasteurized whole milk available that I know of in Saskatchewan (unless you have your own cow or goat) comes via Vancouver from Quebec and is available in a couple of health food stores in Regina and Saskatoon. Please note: pasteurization destroys the calcium in milk. I am sure there is a relationship between pasteurization and osteoporosis.

Poultry, hogs and cattle are frequently fed antibiotics, growth hormones and meat byproducts until we had the mad cow disease scare recently.

### **Please note**

If citizens are going to improve the quality of their food supply they will have to do it themselves. Certified organic food is not served in the five restaurants in the House of Commons or the four restaurants operated by the Saskatchewan government. Politicians are not interested in food quality. Federal MPs accepted a 20 per cent raise in pay recently but never asked to have their food upgraded to "certified organic". Media reports July 21, 2001 stated that the water fountains had to be shut down in the federal environmental building in Hull, Que. because of parasites in the water.

### **Recommendations**

1. Water is our most valuable resource.

- We need a water survey of all water sources in Saskatchewan to find sources of water free of pesticides, trihalomethanes and parasites.
- Legislative action should be taken to protect the sources of safe water.
- Programs should be introduced to clean up the remaining water supplies as soon as possible.

2. Programs should be introduced as soon as possible to raise awareness of the need for an adequate supply of certified organic food to supply:

school lunch programs, school cafeterias, hospitals, university restaurants, nursing and senior homes and restaurants at Parliament Hill and provincial legislatures.

3. The most recent report by the federal environmental committee of the House of Commons recommends that chemical farmers should be subsidized to move to certified organic farming. We support that recommendation.

4. Keep all rural hospitals open, especially for the benefit of seniors, handicapped and low-income citizens.

Elmer Laird, president,  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

May 18, 1998 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:  
Clay Serby,  
Saskatchewan's Health Minister

Dear Mr. Serby:

Re: Recognizing environmental and agricultural pollution as a major contributor to Saskatchewan's health care cost. The time is long overdue to recognize environmental and agricultural pollution as a major factor contributing to our health care cost. We have transnational drug and chemical companies selling us large volumes of toxic herbicides and pesticides for farm and garden use on one hand and also selling us large volumes of drugs to attempt to keep us well and functioning. Almost every week we hear of a new disease and most of the time a new support group is organized to help the people with that particular illness.

We are on a downward spiral, the weeds and pests are becoming immune to the pesticides and almost every week we hear of a germ that antibiotics will not control. The medical profession is pleading with livestock feedlot operators to stop using antibiotics in feed rations because people are building up an immunity to them. Your cabinet colleague, Agriculture Minister Eric Upshall is supporting Heartland Livestock's (owned by Sask Wheat Pool) program to build large hog factories all over the province that require the use of antibiotics in feed rations and will contribute to the human resistance to antibiotics and to the pollution of our precious water resources.

You, as Minister of Health, and the NDP government have been hammered on all sides about health care - at the moment it is compensation for Hepatitis-C victims, keeping the Plains Hospital, long waiting lists, shortage of nursing staff, medical doctors who are exhausted and so on.

Your government is attempting to assure southern Saskatchewan citizens that 675 beds is all that is needed in Regina. What you are failing to recognize is the fact that when the NDP started to revise the Medicare program in 1991 that might have been an accurate projection if illnesses had not increased in the last seven years. I don't know what the statistics are but citizens are aware of the fact that every time you turn around you become more and more aware of the increase in illnesses, perceived or otherwise. You, Mr. Serby, are not addressing that feeling of insecurity taxpayers have about the ability of the health care system to meet the health care needs of the future.

Admittedly, there is new medical technology to replace organs and worn out joints but, on the other hand, hospital stays have been greatly reduced. You have only one route to go to address the taxpayers insecurity at this time. It will be very difficult because the Romanow NDP government has had a perfect record of ignoring environmental issues. The Blakeney NDP government was much more progressive; i.e., Dr. David Penman was a health consultant in the Department of the Environment. During the Blakeney government's term of office, Dr. Penman had an excellent understanding and gave very reliable advice to everyone who was interested in the health hazards of toxic chemicals.

The Devine government fived Dr. Penman; they didn't want to know about environmental health hazards and neither does the Romanow Government.

Your cabinet colleague, Agriculture Minister Eric Upshall, supports a policy of promoting chemical agriculture only. He doesn't have any agronomists on staff with degrees in organic agriculture. In more enlightened societies, like Holland and Denmark, they have been graduating agronomists in organic agriculture for at least ten years. Saskatchewan is the largest user of pesticides (herbicides and pesticides) in Canada. For years, Statistics Canada reported that we used in excess of one million twenty-litre containers annually. Now the system of recording them has changed and figures are not available. However, we know that spraying season lasts for at least seven months every year.

Federal research grants all go to genetic engineering or chemical agriculture. They are "matching grants" and the only people that can match the federal grants are the chemical companies so only research in chemical agriculture is being done.

Your colleague, Environment Minister Lorne Scott, ignores environmental pollution as much as possible, particularly water pollution. He is afraid of losing tax revenue from the oil companies; i.e. the gas line pollution problem on the Perry Anton farm at Fox Valley has not been resolved in seven years. Anton lost cattle in 1991 that were poisoned drinking from a polluted dugout on his farm. Scott doesn't recognize hog factory pollution because Upshall is promoting the hog factories.

In an article in the February 26, 1998 edition of *The Western Producer*, journalist, Michael Raine, reports, "Herbicides are present in every water supply in Western Canada according to a study by the National Hydrological Research Centre in Saskatoon. Some dugouts considered to have drinkable water by 15,000 Saskatchewan families contain levels of pesticides as much as 1,000 times more detectable than European water supplies. Farmers and custom applicators start to void pesticides through their urine twenty-four hours after they start to spray." No one is concerned about toxic chemical residue in farmers' urine and how it might effect prostate or cervix cancer. However, at the Olympics, there was grave concern about marijuana residue in snowboard Olympic Champion, Ross Rebagliati's urine. At the time of writing, press reports indicate that there is grave concern about finding marijuana residue in the urine of prisoners in jails.

Cures have been found for some kinds of cancer but, in spite of the millions of dollars that have been spent on cancer research since World War II, cancer is still on the increase.

Saskatchewan is a province with large agricultural resources. Many people around the world want chemical free or "certified organic food". Mrs. Myrna Miller, President of N.I.C.O. Environmental Health Strategy who lives in Burnaby, BC, says they eat only certified organic food. She says they have three grocery stores that will deliver it to their door. Her daughter, Heather, who is an Environmental Health Nurse, says the demand in Vancouver for certified organic food is escalating rapidly.

Many children have allergies to chemicals and their mothers have allergies. Both mothers and children are frequently sick and that is what is causing the increased demand.

Well, Mr. Serby, you have only one alternative, as a Minister of Health and as a government, to create confidence in Saskatchewan's health care program. Clean up the environment, develop a healthy environmental lifestyle for all Saskatchewan taxpayers.

Saskatchewan, lead the way in developing a National Medicare program. What are we waiting for? Saskatchewan can lead the way in cleaning up the environment and developing a healthy lifestyle, prospering financially while doing it.

Sincerely,  
Elmer Laird, President Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation



October 18, 2004 Davidson Leader

### **Patients need certified organic food**

Open letter to Deputy Premier Clay Serby

Re: All patients need nutritious certified organic food and particularly cancer patients to build up their immune system to regain their health and also to avoid a relapse of their illness.

Did you have an adequate supply of certified organic food?

I was pleased to see you at the official opening of Craik Eco-Centre on Oct. 8, 2004 and obviously you are back in the "harness" so to speak.

Hippocrates, who is considered the father of medicine, was born in 460 BC and lived to 377 BC. He said "Let your food be your medicine and your medicine be your food." That was a long time ago, but the facts have not changed regardless of scientific developments. When I was on an organic tour of Cuba in February 2003 I met a Dr. Fritz Balzer, a leading German Scientist, who gave the tour group an hour and a half lecture on the advantages of organic food. He said that his research had demonstrated unequivocally that certified organic food was more nutritious than chemically produced food. That is why I am completely convinced that all of Saskatchewan hospitals should serve certified organic food only and furthermore, all patients should have an adequate supply when they return home.

In addition, all pregnant women from the time of conception should also have organic food to be sure their child has the best possible chance to have a healthy life. I was born in 1924 and I enjoyed the equivalent of certified organic food for the first 25 years of my life until pesticides were introduced on farms here in 1949. I grew up in what I consider poverty in the depression of the 1930s on a farm south of Swift Current. For breakfast every morning I drank organic fresh whole milk from a cow (we didn't have a fridge to keep the milk or any electric power in the house). I ate organic fresh eggs every day. We also had organic home-grown vegetables in the summer and a supply Mother canned for the winter. Our meat was organic beef, pork and poultry. There was no source of chemically grown foods like we have today that are shipped in from Florida or California. We rarely had pop or candy, our desserts were usually home canned fruits or puddings.

Unfortunately, the medical people and nutritionists here in North America haven't realized the fact that organic food is more nutritious. Even some of my chemical farmer friends on "coffee row" here in Davidson admit that organic food is more nutritious than chemically raised food. Perhaps if we had a Whistle Blowers Act or law here in Saskatchewan the experts in medicine and nutrition might feel free to speak out on the topic of food quality.

In the 1930s, there were no pesticides to pollute our water and air.

The foundation of good health is clean unpolluted water and air and certified organic food. However, here in Saskatchewan, Dr. Allan Cessna, with the National Hydrology Water Institute says that all of our surface water is polluted with herbicides and one-third of our deep wells. Time to clean up.

I am writing this letter to you on a farmer to farmer basis. In our brief conversation at Craik I asked you if you had started to organic farm yet. You said "Just a little." You went on to say that you were having trouble convincing your brothers to move to organic.

An article in a recent paper said that cancer deaths in 1921 were six per cent for men and eight per cent for women per year. In another article in The Leader Post a short time ago it reported that in the not too distant future, I think it was 2007-2008, there would be 39 per cent cancer deaths for men and 42 per cent for women per year or vice versa, I should have kept the articles. Here in Saskatchewan, I know we have the highest rate of breast and cervical cancer and the second highest rate of prostate cancer in Canada.

We use one-third of the pesticides in Canada and I know that pesticides are the main cause of cancer. If we had a Whistle Blowers Act I know we would find out the truth much easier and quicker.

Well, Mr. Serby, like many of my neighbours you have an off-farm job. I expect it will help finance your farming operations. In any case, as you well know, both farmers and their wives have off-farm jobs to help finance the farming operations. I read an article the other day that said farmers on an average have had a minus income for the last three years and I don't see any possibility of it improving next year. What we need today more than anything else is leadership that will move us out of this era where we are dominated by transnational drug and chemical corporations.

The NDP used to support the family farm, why don't you make a stand now? What really is at stake is our Medicare program. Money will not save it. If we don't clean up our environment it is going down the tube. Premier Calvert says he is going to "Green" Saskatchewan. Why don't you move to organic and give it a try? There is certainly no economic reason now to stay with chemical agriculture.

Organic grains and livestock enjoy a good price today. I am enclosing a brochure for the Organic Connections Conference in Saskatoon November 14-16 at Centennial auditorium. I am also enclosing a letter on pesticide addiction that may help you move your brothers along the way.

I would like to meet with you to discuss transnational to certified organic agriculture.

Remember, you as a cancer patient will require a lifetime supply of certified organic food and pure unpolluted water.

Elmer Laird, president  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

December 16, 1996 Davidson Leader

Open Letter To:  
Ms. Alexa McDonough, Leader  
New Democratic Party of Canada  
Ottawa, Ontario

Dear Ms. McDonough:

Re: Policy Proposal #1. Develop environmental clean-up policies to support national Medicare program.

Reason: To restore the NDP to its former left-wing position in the national political spectrum.

When former NDP Leader David Lewis launched his 1972 election campaign his main target was the “corporate welfare bums”. The plane he campaigned across Canada in was christened “Burn Air”. If memory serves me correctly the NDP elected thirty-five MPs to the House of Commons. The question is: why don’t we hear anything today from the NDP about “corporate welfare bums”? They are still there. In fact, today transnational drug and chemical companies are selling billions of dollars’ worth of pesticides (pesticides, herbicides insecticides and fungicides) to Canadians that are sprayed on farms, gardens, lawns, golf courses, forests and roadsides. These same transnational drug and chemical companies are also selling billions of dollars’ worth of drugs to attempt to cure the many illnesses caused by pesticide residue in our food, water and air. They are making huge profits on the sales of both drugs and chemicals. It is little wonder that our federal and provincial governments have huge debts and deficits. Undoubtedly our national Medicare program will go bankrupt if we continue down this road.

Saskatchewan is recognized internationally as the birthplace of Medicare. The farm movement can take a lot of the credit for making it happen. Women have traditionally been the providers of health care in the family. Saskatchewan rural women have been very vocal in all their organizations over the years in demanding health care programs since the early pioneer homesteaders arrived. Many were a long distance from a doctor and they had poor roads and slow transportation as well as large families to look after.

Finally, after the depression of the 1930’s and World War H, on July 1, 1947, the first Health Region was established in the Swift Current district. On July 1, 1962, the first provincial health care program in Canada was established in Saskatchewan Farmers Union, with the help of S.F.U. members right across the province provided the Woodrow Lloyd government with a strong lobby and can certainly claim a lot of the credit.

The S.F.U. was a family organization of men, women, and young people. Without S.F.U. support areas government Medicare programs very likely would have never happened. The national health care program followed closely on the heels of the Saskatchewan program in 1966 (thirty years ago). The fact that the national Medicare program passed the House of Commons was largely due to the efforts of former

Saskatchewan. Premier Tommy Douglas who was then federal leader of the NDP at that time and there was a minority Liberal government.

Agricultural chemicals, a wartime technology, were introduced in Saskatchewan in 1949 and their use has skyrocketed ever since.

A new book was published in 1996 entitled "Our Stolen Future". The authors are two environmental scientists and a journalist. Theo Colborn and John Peterson Myers are the scientists and Dianne Dumanoski is the journalist. The foreword was written by U.S. Vice- President Al Gore. The authors say that maximum permissible limits of chemical residue are meaningless. Health hazards from chemical residue have always been determined by their effects on adults. They go on to say that very minimal amounts of chemical residue can be very dangerous to a fetus in the womb and even to the young child after birth. They describe how chemicals that are picked up at the bottom end of the food chain may be multiplied many times before they reach humans at the top end of the chain. Testing for chemical residue for many years after agricultural chemicals were introduced was for toxicity only. Later on, tests finally branched out to recognize cancer, birth defects and genetic disorders. The authors report that recent studies show that sperm counts have dropped fifty percent since agricultural chemicals were introduced and birth defects are much more numerous in both humans and wildlife. Perhaps the biggest concern is the fact that chemical residue in the environment is continually attacking the human immune system to the extent that there are numerous diseases today the human body is unable to defend itself against and antibiotics are no longer effective in many cases.

On Tuesday, November 19, 1996, journalist Susan Ormiston on CTV's public affairs program, "W5", interviewed a number of medical doctors. They said there are many viruses today that antibiotics will not control.

Health care in Canada is in a crisis in many ways not only financial. Evidence of concern is the phenomenal growth of health food stores, health and environmental publications. Many mothers are as concerned about the health of their families today as they were in pre-Medicare days. Farmers have traditionally done everything possible to protect their crops; however, they are faced with change. Agriculture chemicals are obsolete, pests and weeds have built up a resistance to them.

The only reasons we have record sales of pesticides is the fact that big bucks are spent on advertising chemical sales campaigns plus the fact that federal and provincial departments of agriculture have "chemical only" agriculture policies. The only logical solution is a clean, healthy environment.

Well, Ms. McDonough, it is to be hoped that in the next election campaign you develop policies to challenge the status quo of chemical agriculture, protect the national Medicare program, provide leadership for an environmental clean-up campaign which will restore the NDP to a truly left-wing party status.

Sincerely,  
Elmer Laird, President Back To The Farm Research  
Foundation

November 25, 1996 Davidson Leader

Open Letter To:  
Ms. Nettie Wiebe,  
National President and Board of Directors,  
National Farmers Union

Dear Nettie et al:

Re: Sponsoring a Rural Environmental Clean-Up Program

To Help Save the national health program and to protect the health of farm families. The national health care program is in a crisis, not only financially but also it is heavily overloaded with illnesses caused by environmental factors. Forty-one percent of the total drugs used are antihistamines which can be related to health problems caused by environmental pollutants. Today, transnational drug and chemical companies are selling billions of dollars of pesticides (also herbicides and fungicides) that are sprayed on farms, gardens, lawns, forests and roadsides. These same transnational drug and chemical companies are selling billions of dollars worth of drugs to attempt to cure the illnesses caused by -pesticide residue in our food, water and air. They are making huge profits on the sales of both drugs and chemicals. It's little wonder our federal and provincial governments have huge debts and deficits. Saskatchewan is recognized internationally as the birthplace of Medicare. The farm movement can take a lot of the credit for making it happen. Women have traditionally been the providers of health care in the family. Saskatchewan rural women have been very vocal in all their organizations over the years in demanding health care programs since the early pioneer homesteaders arrived. Many were a long distance from a doctor and they had poor roads and slow transportation as well as large families to look after.

Finally, after the depression of the 1930s and World War II, on July 1, 1947, the first Health Region was established in the Swift Current district. On July 1, 1962, the first provincial health care program in Canada was established in Saskatchewan. Alf Gleave, President of the Saskatchewan Farmers Union, with the help of S.F.U. members right across the province provided the Woodrow Lloyd government with a strong lobby and can certainly claim a lot of the credit. Without S.F.U. support in the rural areas government Medicare programs very likely would never have happened. The national health care program followed closely on the heels of the Saskatchewan program. Agriculture chemicals, a wartime technology, were introduced in Saskatchewan in 1949, about the same year as the Founding Convention of S.F.U.

In Winnipeg at the Founding Convention of the National Farmers Union in August, 1969, President-elect Roy Atkinson, Landis, warned the 1500 delegates and visitors about multi-national corporations and oligopolies that were attempting to control our farms and our lives. Well he was right; it has happened; we are controlled by the drug and chemical transnational corporations today. If we don't take action immediately pollution and illness will get increasingly worse as time goes on and farm families will be affected more than the rest of the population.

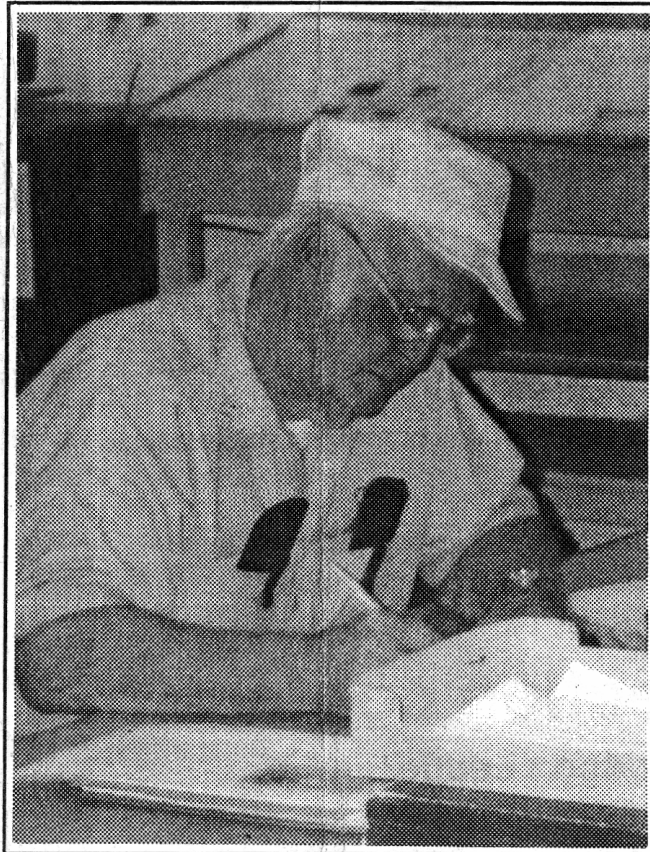
In agriculture, chemicals are no longer working, weeds and pests have both built up a resistance to pesticides. Even the prairie departments of agriculture and chemical companies are saying that herbicides should no longer be considered a first line of defence against weeds. Biotechnology is being used to breed more herbicide resistant plants so the crop will stand heavier applications of toxic chemicals which causes even more soil, water and food pollution.

On Tuesday, November 19, 1996, journalist Susan Oriniston on CTV's public affairs program, W5, interviewed a number of medical doctors. They said there are many viruses today that antibiotics will not control. The N.F.U. is the only direct dues-paying farm family membership organization that is chartered by the government of Canada. It has the organization structure to launch an environmental clean-up campaign. In addition, it has many members who are certified organic farmers who have established the pattern for farming for the future. We also have a growing number of consumers who both nationally and internationally lack confidence in our food supply because of pesticide residue in the food. The best way and very likely the only way to enjoy good health in the future is to produce healthy, nutritious food in a clean environment.

At the next convention (to be held in December, 1996, in Saskatoon) the N.F.U. should examine its collective navel and its roots for guidance on future action. I have written to the Hon. David Dingwall, Federal Minister of Health, about launching an environmental cleanup program. Well, Nettie, we are indeed in a health crisis and I sincerely hope the N.F.U. will demonstrate the leadership to resolve the crisis as they have many times in the past.

Sincerely,  
Elmer Laird, President  
Back To The Farm Research Foundation

# V. AGRICULTURAL POLICY



Local resident Elmer Laird working on his weekly column at *The Davidson Leader* office.

(*Leader* photo by travis)

"We have poverty in our own country and a hungry world to help feed and farmers should not be handicapped by obsolete "chemical only" agriculture policies that are polluting our air, water and soil and have detrimental effects on the health of humans, domestic animals and wildlife."

--- Elmer Laird, June 1, 1996

*This last section incorporates topics concerning farming methods, health, the environment, and rural communities into policy-making. As an avid letter-writer, Elmer Laird wrote to federal and provincial politicians with critiques of current policy, suggestions for alternatives, and calls for action amidst the farm crisis.*

*In letters to the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB), he discusses marketing policies for certified organic grain and steps the CWB should take to better serve certified organic farmers.*

*The final articles push for organic agriculture, healthy living, and environmental sustainability to be included not only in agricultural policies, but also integrated into the services sector, the education system, universities, advertising, and the media. Since all aspects of life are interconnected in a complex web, this is a crucial point if Saskatchewan is going to take on a more socially and environmentally sustainable path.*



November 22, 1993 Davidson Leader

The Hon. Daryl Cunningham, Saskatchewan's Agriculture Minister, released the long awaited N.D.P. agriculture policy on November 8, 1993, over two years after they were elected. The twenty-six page document entitled "Agriculture 2000: A Strategic Direction For The Future Of Saskatchewan's Agriculture" is like "Christmas Wish" list. It sets out in rather vague terms what they hope can be achieved by the year 2000. However, there really are no procedures spelled out on how to get there. Even though it mentions "environmental sustainability" seven times and marketing "organic food" once, it does not mention the \$41.6 million Federal Provincial Green Plan for agriculture that has never been formally announced by any Agricultural Minister.

The main purpose of the Green Plan is to encourage environmentally sustainable agriculture or organic farming. (Incidentally, the closing date for application is December 1, 1993.) The policy statement does not mention the cancellation or abandonment of Provincial Agricultural Chemical Promotion policies which are the main reason for the environmental problems in the first place. We are obviously going to move in the next century with two policies, one to pollute and one to cleanup the environment.

Agriculture has always been acknowledged as the foundation of Saskatchewan's economy. The policy statement does not examine the role of agriculture in the total context of the Saskatchewan economy which is not working in the best interest of many Saskatchewan citizens. An example of this is that Saskatchewan has 43 per cent of the total cultivated land in Canada and 1 million people, or 4 per cent of the Canadian population. Even with this high ratio of cultivated land to people we have many hungry children and adults receiving poor quality food from Saskatchewan's nine food banks.

It is extremely difficult to understand why we have hungry people and people being fed on poor quality food when you consider the following factors:

(1) Saskatchewan soil is capable of producing large quantities of high quality vegetables, fruits, cereal grains, oil seeds and legumes, livestock, poultry, and honey.

(2) Saskatchewan agriculture is highly mechanized; it has high tech farm equipment and the ability to design new equipment to meet any need if required.

(3) Saskatchewan farmers are very skilled at operating, maintaining and repairing equipment.

(4) We have Federal Agricultural Research, Provincial Research Council, and Private Agricultural Research Laboratories.

(5) In extension services we have the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA) and Provincial Agricultural Extension Services, and to some extent -- grain and oil seed companies.

(6) We have Plant Breeders employed by both government and corporations and Registered Seed Growers.

(7) We have the Federal Farm Credit Corporation, chartered banks and Credit Unions to finance farming operations.

In fact we have all the agriculture services anyone in a third world country could never dream of and at the same time we have:

(1) Large numbers of farmers going bankrupt and high stress levels in rural communities. Many communities threatened, some disappearing.

(2) Soil degradation, loss of soil fertility often caused by poor farming practices and the application of commercial fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides.

(3) Rural and urban water supplies polluted with toxic chemicals.

(4) High rate of unemployment.

(5) Soaring health cost.

Unfortunately our economy is not working and to date the Saskatchewan government has not recognized the basic problems or attempted to address them.

The date set for the vote on NAFTA in the U.S. Congress is November 17, 1993. If it passes it will mean that U.S. based multi-nationals will have more multi-nationals will have more control of our lives than they already have. If it is defeated it will give us the opportunity to continue to live as a free people in a sovereign nation.

May 13, 1996 Davidson Leader

Open Letter To:  
Premier Roy Romanow  
Agriculture Minister Eric Upshall  
Health Minister Eric Clime  
Environment Minister Lorne Scott

Dear Gentlemen:

Prime Minister Jean Chretien will be calling a First Ministers conference following the B.C. election. He is looking for new approaches of common interest among all provinces to keep Quebec in Canada, although he says it will not be a constitutional conference. I would suggest one of the first things is to find a new method of negotiating. First Ministers have followed the same negotiating method ever since the 1971 Constitutional Conference in Victoria, B.C. The method of negotiating has been patterned after "plea bargaining" in legal terms (most of the First Ministers are lawyers), whereas out here on the farm we would call it "horse trading".

It will also be important to define some national objectives worth working for, particularly for young people to enjoy normal, healthy, productive lives. I know some United Nations committee members said Canada was the best place in the world to live and Saskatchewan is the best province to live in. This doesn't mean that we should sit on our record and do nothing. We might, with a little effort, make it a much better place to live.

For example, it is spring and during the summer Saskatchewan farmers will again be spraying at least one million twenty-litre containers of toxic chemicals on Saskatchewan crops. This has been going on for thirty-five or forty years. The result of all this activity is polluted soil, air and surface water supplies. All major Saskatchewan cities are using surface water for their potable water supplies. In addition, urban municipalities, federal and provincial governments and home owners will be buying millions of dollars worth of toxic lawn and garden chemicals. They will be applying them without any warning posters to say "Keep Off The Grass, Toxic Chemicals Applied Here".

At the same time our national Medicare program is in jeopardy, many environmental illnesses including cancer and respiratory diseases are on the increase as a result of environmental pollution and we have a low sperm count.

In the meantime, the Occupational Health and Safety Act is hopelessly inadequate. Some stores store bags of lawn fertilizer impregnated with toxic 2-4D. The bags leak toxic fumes and employees are exposed to toxic fumes all day and customers whenever they enter the store.

Provincial Occupational Health and Safety inspectors do not have enough authority under the act to protect non-unionized employees or customers shopping in the many stores across the province that sell lawn and garden chemicals. The Provincial Laboratory in Regina, after forty-five years of using toxic pesticides in Saskatchewan, does not test for chemical residue in water supplies. Many people are misled because the Provincial Lab does not inform them of the fact that their water samples are not tested for

toxic chemicals. In fact, many farmers are informed “Water is safe for infant feeding” and it hasn’t been tested for pesticides.

There is little doubt that there is a relationship between environmental pollution, the apparently soon to be bankrupt national health plan and the increase in cancer, environmental illnesses, respiratory diseases and low sperm count. In the last few months we have heard about Mad Cow Disease in England and more recently the equivalent of Mad Cow Disease in elk in Saskatchewan. In Canada we have been feeding chicken litter and animal protein (waste meat products) to animals for years, just the same as they were doing in England. Reports indicate this procedure caused Mad Cow Disease. Federal Agriculture Minister Ralph Goodale and Provincial Agriculture Minister Eric Upshall are apparently going to defend the “status quo” instead of cleaning up obsolete practices that no doubt will sooner or later lead to disasters in the livestock industry. This is an opportune time to clean up the environment and particularly the agriculture and food sector. Both weeds and pests have built up a resistance to pesticides. Prairie Departments of Agriculture and chemical companies have both said that “Chemicals are no longer a first line of defence against weeds.” North American beef is not accepted in Europe because it is fed growth hormones.

Well, Mr. Premier, the main reason for all this chemical pollution is the federal and provincial agricultural policy. All Departments of Agriculture in Canada have a policy to promote chemical agriculture. You will have an opportunity at the next First Ministers conference to promote environmental clean-up, abandon the “chemical only” agricultural policies, save the national Medicare program and a lot of pain and suffering of many people who are ill now or may be in the future.

In political terms, the “cut back paranoia” policies of the last election campaign will not work a second time. Why not give environmental clean-up a chance and give Canadians a national goal to work for, give your party a chance to win the next provincial election and create many new jobs while doing it in the global village.

Elmer Laird, President  
Back To The Farm  
Research Foundation

June 1, 1996 Davidson Leader

Open Letter To:

Mr. Jerry Pickard, MP, Chairman

Members of the Agriculture Committee of the House of Commons

Ottawa

Dear Mr. Pickard,

Re: Abandoning "Chemical Only" Agriculture Policies of the Federal Department of Agriculture

I am writing to respectfully request that your committee recommend to Agriculture Minister Ralph Goodale that he discontinue the "chemical only" policies of the Federal Department of Agriculture immediately. We further recommend that he make research and extension services available to certified organic farmers and others who want to abandon chemical agriculture. He is presently providing millions of dollars for biotechnology research even before the "guidelines" for the control of biotechnology have been developed. We have poverty in our own country and a hungry world to help feed and farmers should not be handicapped by obsolete "chemical only" agriculture policies that are polluting our air, water and soil and have detrimental effects on the health of humans, domestic animals and wildlife.

Weeds and pests have both built up a resistance to herbicides and pesticides. A pamphlet is available called the "Resistance of Weeds to Herbicides" published by the three prairie Departments of Agriculture. The printing of the pamphlet was financed by Cyanamid Canada Inc. and Farmline (both chemical companies). In effect, it says "Chemicals are no longer a first line of defence against weeds". Also of interest is a report called the "Upshall Update" (Mr. Upshall is the Minister of Agriculture for Saskatchewan) stating that since 1986 Canada Thistle has increased from 19% to 46%, Sow Thistle from 11% to 31%, dandelions from 3.5% to 18% and quack grass from 4% to 10%. Both pamphlets are available at Rural Development Offices.

All these increases have taken place while new and more sophisticated methods of applying chemicals have been developed and increasing amounts of chemicals have been applied yearly, although Statistics Canada is very vague on agricultural chemical use.

The history of the development of the organic farming and food industry has demonstrated that pesticides and herbicides are not needed to grow adequate supplies of food. Organic agriculture has received very little help from Federal and Provincial Agriculture Research and Extension Services because research and extension dollars were only available for chemical agriculture. For instance, the Canadian Organic Advisory Board (C.O.A.B.) has been attempting to develop national certification standards for organic agriculture for ten years. Former Federal Agriculture Minister Bill McKnight promised the standards would be in place by January 1, 1992. They have been financing their efforts with the odd grant here and there while other national agricultural committees are well funded. It is obvious that we will never have a national certification

policy until the “chemical only” agriculture policies are abandoned. We can no longer afford biases in food production policies. We have hungry people in Canada (430 Food Banks to date) and a hungry world outside our borders.

In Canada we are fortunate enough to have many acres of fertile soil, a highly technical agricultural industry and top quality research and extension services. However, we are trying to fly on one wing (the chemical wing) and it is no longer working. The time to abandon our “chemical only” agriculture policies is long overdue. It is important that federal and provincial agricultural research and extension dollars be freed up to develop alternative agriculture practices. Eliminating the pollution caused by agriculture chemicals may save our national Medicare program at the same time.

Elmer Laird, President  
Back To The Farm Research Foundation

October 28, 1998 Davidson Leader

Open Letter To:  
Ms. Christine Nymark, Director  
Environmental Bureau  
Policy Branch, Agriculture Canada  
Ottawa, Ontario

Dear Ms. Nymark:

Re: Draft Policy Statement (1996) for Sustainable Agriculture and Agri-Food  
Development in Canada

I read with considerable difficulty your fifty-four page draft of Sustainable Agriculture and AgriFood Development in Canada. It would appear that it is written in a manner that would be politically acceptable to the Ottawa Chemical and Drug lobby and the terminology used would be classed as Ottawa "bureaucratese". You claim that you have consulted with farm organizations across Canada but you neglected to consult the National Farmers Union which is the only direct dues-paying farm organization in Canada that has a national charter. It is also obvious that you never consulted any certified farm organizations who are the leaders in developing an environmentally sustainable agriculture. Your report briefly mentions organic farmers but doesn't mention any of their objectives or why certified organic food is needed for domestic and overseas markets. Today the Wildlife Federation, the Sierra Club and the recent International Environmental Conference in Montreal have expressed concerns about "endangered species" like the Burrowing Owl and the destruction of wildlife habitat. However, no one seems to consider "human beings" as an endangered species or the farmers and their families who are exposed seven months of the year to toxic pesticides.

Pesticides were developed for biological warfare during World War II. They were adapted to agricultural use in Canada in the late 1940's. Early tests were for toxicity only. We had and still have the LD 50 rating for testing toxicity. If the pesticide was fed to rats and only 49% died in a designated number of days, it was considered safe to use., If 51% died, it was considered unsafe. Many years later we began to realize that pesticides may cause cancer, birth defects and genetic mutations. In a new book entitled "Our Stolen Future" authors Theo Colborn, Dianne Rumandoski and Peter Myers describe a very uncertain future for the human race as a result of environmental pollution, particularly in the industrialized world but also in some developing nations. In addition to the concerns expressed above, they point out that male sperm count in the population not exposed directly to toxic chemicals (farmers and chemical plant workers) has dropped 50%. They describe vividly the dangers minimal amounts of chemical residue may cause the fetus in the womb. Chemical exposure may cause learning disabilities, hyperactivity or retardation. Perhaps the worst effect of toxic chemicals in the environment is their constant attack on the human immune system (and very likely wildlife too). Older chemicals like D.D.T. and P.C.B.'s are still in the environment and along with the newer ones are working their way up the food chain and accumulating in human tissues. This is

all happening at the same time antibiotics are losing their effectiveness. Many viruses can no longer be controlled by antibiotics.

Here on Canadian farms both weeds and pests are building up a resistance to herbicides and pesticides. The “spraying season” that used to last two weeks thirty years ago now lasts seven months. There has been an increase in chemical allergies and respiratory problems and nationally health costs are soaring.

**Recommendations:**

1. Establish priorities. The first one should be to develop a clean environment so the human race has an opportunity to survive. We need unpolluted water and air and an adequate supply of certified organic nutritious food to maintain health.

2. Federal and Provincial governments should immediately abandon their support for chemical agriculture only.

3. All nutrition comes from the soil or the sea and fish stocks are dwindling. Canadian soils have deteriorated over the years, which means a shortage of nutrition in the food. There should be A) ongoing monitoring of the food supply to make sure the maximum amount of nutrition in harvested crops finds its way to the consumer’s table; and B) ongoing research to find ways and means of improving nutritional levels in the soil.

4. Federal and Provincial Departments of Agriculture should discontinue supporting research promoting chemical farming and support research certified organic farmers need. In the last thirty years there has been very little research to support organic farming but for a start there should be ongoing research for a) developing biological controls for pests and weeds; b) the science of allelopathy so farmers understand how to use plants to compete against weeds; c) research into methods of using crop rotation to improve soil fertility; d) marketing studies on how to establish the principle of “single desk” selling for all certified organic products; and e) establish a National Certification Program for certified organic products.

5. The production of open range livestock should be encouraged by subsidies, particularly poultry and hogs. The subsidy should support employing labour because “open range” production will require more labour. It will also increase rural population density.

6. Growth hormones should be banned from all livestock and poultry production. BST should, be banned in the dairy industry. The use of antibiotics should only be permitted when animals are sick, never as a part of a regular diet.

7. We have heard a lot about the mad cow disease, BSE, in England. The disease in cattle is becoming more closely linked to its equivalent in humans, Cruetzfeldt-Jakob disease. The disease is caused by feeding dead meat (as protein) to animals. We continue to feed dead meat and poultry manure to livestock and poultry in Canada’ and it should be banned immediately.

8. The introduction of biotechnology products should be stopped until national guidelines are developed.

I hope you will include these regulations in your final proposal for environmentally sustainable agriculture.

Elmer Laird, President  
Back To The Farm Research. Foundation



January 18, 1999 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:

Dr. Jim Harding, retired former 'Head of the School of Human Justice, University of Saskatchewan, member of both the federal and Saskatchewan Green parties of Canada, former member of Regina city council, political activist.

Harding dropped in a few days ago on his way to Saskatoon and asked me what I thought the agriculture policy of the Green Party should be for the next provincial election. Premier Romanow is talking about calling one this spring. I told him the *Green Parry Agriculture Policy* should be "Environmentally Friendly". However, all political parties should also have agriculture policies that would help clean up the environment, provide pure unpolluted water, air and nutritious certified organic food for all residents of the province and for our customers in other parts of Canada and the world. It should repopulate our rural communities and attract young people back to the farm.

Agriculture is in a crisis. We must recognize and identify the problems. High tech agriculture is a failure in Saskatchewan. We have 43 per cent of the cultivated land in Canada (about 65-70 million acres). We have only one million people, high-tech agriculture, highly skilled farmers, professional extension and research services, yet we have hungry people and lineups at food banks that are growing longer. Pesticide residues were found in food in the parliamentary restaurants at the House of Commons recently. Our surface water supplies in the province are polluted with pesticides. Our National Health Care Program is breaking down. Healthy nutritious food and a clean environment is the foundation of good health. The time is long over due to look at the foundation of food production.

The following are general recommendations for health protection from pollution. Citizens need information on health hazards from food, water and air pollution. The best protection is to have informed citizens. The Green Party, if elected, should upgrade and expand government services so Saskatchewan citizens can become better informed on environmental and health hazards of the high tech world we live in.

1. Establish the provincial health department as a senior ministry of the provincial government. The departments of Agriculture and Environment should be junior departments responsible to the Health Department. The minister of health would have the authority to review all agricultural and environmental policies to make sure they are "health" positive.

2. The provincial laboratory, Department of Health, should have the authority and technology to test water samples for all toxic chemical residues for all communities and citizens that require this service in the province.

3. The provincial laboratory should expand its water testing services to all rural service centres in the province so citizens can take in water samples and discuss firsthand the water quality with the technologist that would operate the gas-liquid comotograph used for testing the water.

4. The provincial laboratory should provide the same testing services for pesticide residues in the food.

5. The provincial government should make death or illness from pesticide poisoning "notifiable" under the *Saskatchewan Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

The Green Party should develop renewable energy resources. The federal government at the recent International Environmental Conference at Kyoto, Japan committed Canada to reducing greenhouse gases to 1990 levels. The Green Party, if elected, should do the following:

1. Develop small and large scale (or contract to private companies), the development of “wind farms” for generating electrical power for Saskatchewan.
2. Encourage by tax writeoffs or subsidies the development of solar heat and other energy efficiency systems for businesses and farms.

The Green Party should support low energy environmentally friendly transportation. They should do the following:

1. Railroads are the lowest energy form of transportation, they are environmentally friendly and we already have them and they should be preserved and expanded. If necessary, they should be nationalized to provide Canadians with the best method of transportation possible.

The *Green Party Agricultural Party Policy* should be designed to provide food self-sufficiency at the farm level, community level and provincial and national levels. Present long distant trucking of food causes it to lose quality and become more expensive both in dollars and creating green house gasses. The following should be done:

1. The family farm must continue to be the basic unit of production.
2. Genetic engineering such as genetically engineered herbicide resistant plants, terminator genes and BST/BGH are being promoted by transnational corporations to control farms and farmers and make money. To date, they have contributed nothing to food quality. Our European customers reject them. They should be banned and all food, genetically engineered, products that have been produced to date should be labelled.
3. The *Federal Plant Breeders’ Rights Act* that permits the patenting of plant varieties must be rescinded and we should revert to our former methods of plant breeding. No one should have absolute control over the seeds of the world.

Recommendations for certified organic livestock and poultry production are the following:

1. Ban the use of growth hormones and antibiotics in livestock and poultry production to protect human health. Europe has recently made this decision.
2. Ban the use of “dead meat” and “manure” protein in livestock and poultry feed to prevent the spread of “mad cow” disease.
3. Provide labour subsidies or tax writeoffs for hog house operators who use “straw bedding” methods of keeping hog houses clean and use “composting” to dispose of manure prior to spreading in fields.
4. Promote “open range” housing facilities for livestock and poultry.
5. Provide feed grain subsidies to encourage producers to use certified organic grain in their feeding programs.

Research requirements for certified organic farmers are:

1. How to maintain maximum nutrition in food from when it is grown in the farmer’s field until it reaches the consumer’s table.
2. Develop environmentally friendly methods to restore fertility to the soil.
3. Develop the science of “Allelopathy” for weed control.
4. Developing methods of biological control for pest and weeds.

5. Develop a testing laboratory for evaluating “natural fertilizers” to assure farmers and consumers they do not contain toxic contaminants.

Agriculture policy required for organic production is:

1. Support the family farm method of production.
2. Establish a provincial organic certification program for all organic products.
3. Abandon the chemical only agriculture production policies of the provincial

government.

4. Provide agriculture research and extension service for organic farmers and farmers in transition.

Options for marketing policies are:

1. Single desk selling for cereal grains, oil seeds and legumes.
2. Direct marketing by Canadian Wheat Board of certified organic spring wheat, durum and barley. (board grains).
3. Single desk selling of cattle and hogs.
4. Supply management method of marketing for dairy and poultry products.
5. Abandon the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and North American Free Trade (NAFTA) and reject the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI).

Hope you have a successful campaign.

Elmer Laird,  
President Back To The Farm  
Research Foundation

April 26, 1999 Davidson Leader

Sergio Marchi, Federal International Trade Minister;  
Lyle VanClief, Federal Minister of Agriculture:

It has become abundantly clear that your ministries are more concerned about the future prosperity of the agricultural chemical industry than you are of preserving the family farm. An article by Ed White (Western Producer April 15, 1999) describes the action you took to defeat the environmental legislation passed by the State of North Dakota to protect their citizens from Canadian food products polluted by certain pesticides that may be marketed in North Dakota. You convinced Canada's U.S. Ambassador Raymond Chretien to apply pressure on North Dakota Governor Ed Schafer to veto the environmental bill. It is also abundantly clear international trade laws supersede environmental policy or regulations in a sovereign country. Everyone in the world has a basic right to unpolluted food, water and air and this includes citizens of North Dakota, Canadians and all our other customers in the international marketplace.

Yesterday journalist Rosallee Weloski who was interviewed by CBC Radio host Lindy Thorson reported the average take home pay in 1998 for Saskatchewan farmers was about \$1,000 for the year. However, I haven't heard of either of you expressing any concern about low farm incomes (the big pay out announced before Christmas hasn't arrived) nor have we heard a word about how we are going to improve prices for Canadian food products in the international marketplace. The tactics that you used on North Dakota are the same as you are using in both the national and international marketplace. Europe has completely rejected genetically engineered canola and other cereal and oil seed products.

They have also rejected livestock fed on growth hormones and antibiotics. Japan doesn't want these products either but still takes them. You are trying to diplomatically bulldoze your way into the international marketplace rather than supply what the customer wants. The time is long overdue when our federal and provincial governments should find out the quality of food our customers want and start helping Canadian farmers to produce it. The rules of local, national and international trade remain the same as they have been over the centuries.

Here in Saskatchewan our surface waters are polluted with toxic pesticide residues, our food is polluted and our air is polluted from early spring to late fall. The North Dakota Bill 1335 was a perfectly reasonable one because it gives Canadian farmers two years to cleanup their act to meet the new North Dakota regulations. However, rather than helping Canadian farmers produce organic food or food free of certain chemicals that would make a market more available to them you went the diplomatic route to squash North Dakota Bill 1335.

The City of Regina (population 200,000), because they were concerned about the health of their citizens, have moved from using chemical pesticides to a bacterial pesticide for killing mosquitoes and canker worms. There are some biological herbicides and pesticides for controlling grasshoppers and certain weeds. However, as long as our federal and provincial governments (All but British Columbia) promote only chemical agriculture our environment will continue to deteriorate, our health costs will continue to soar and the price of our agricultural products will continue to drop. Canadian produced

certified organic food products are in demand in the United States and are moving across the border for at least twice the price of chemically grown products. This should tell you something.

Your actions to defeat North Dakota Bill 1335 clearly indicate that both your departments are more interested in protecting the chemical industry rather than the food industry or the health of Canadian citizens.

If at some time you should decide that Canada should restore its reputation in the national and international marketplace for quality foods, I would suggest

1. Abandon your chemical only agriculture policies;
2. Establish research facilities for developing biological controls for weeds and pests; and
3. Start serving certified organic food in the restaurants of the House of Commons. People from all over the world eat there and we don't want them to return to their home countries saying, "even the food in their House of Commons is polluted with pesticides." The restaurants in the House of Commons should be the show place of the Canadian food industry.

— Elmer Laird, president  
Back to the Farm Research Foundation

August 23, 1999 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:

Federal Agriculture Minister Lyle Vanclief and Provincial Agriculture Minister Eric Upshall:

Re: Establishing “political goals” for environmentally friendly organic production similar to that in Sweden.

On Aug. 13, CBC radio’s “Night time” program carried a newscast from Sweden. One item in the newscast said, “Sweden has doubled its subsidies for organic production.” I telephoned the embassy of Sweden in Ottawa and asked for details on the subsidy. On August 16, I received the following fax from Mr. Ulf Lindell, information officer at the embassy of Sweden. It said:

Dear Mr. Laird,

With reference to our conversation earlier today, I have the following information for you from the Swedish Board of Agriculture.

It does not seem to be quite true that Swedish subsidies for organic farming have been doubled. What has been doubled is the target the Swedish Board of Agriculture has set up for the percentage of the agricultural area in Sweden which should be used for ecological farming. Such a “political target” was set in 1994 at 10 per cent of the total area farmed in the year 2000. As this target seemed to be well on its way of being met (in 1998 nine per cent of the farmed area was being used ecologically), the Board writes, it has decided to set a new target of 20 per cent in 2005.

There is a certain financial environmental support for ecological farming. The amounts are calculated according to rather complicated rules. As far as I can see, no change has been announced in this system of environmental support. The announcement made simply says that the support will continue.

Sweden has obviously doubled their target for land to be farmed organically from 10 per cent to 20 per cent not necessarily the subsidy. It is obvious from information in the letter they do have subsidies. They must be higher than those for chemical farming or Swedish farmers wouldn’t be moving as rapidly to organic farming as they are. Sweden’s policies are similar to the rest of Europe’s.

I know the “chemical lobby” is very strong in Canada, and as a result, our federal and provincial governments are more interested in protecting the survival of the agricultural chemical industry than they are the family farm.

However, agriculture chemicals are obsolete, both weeds and pest have built up a resistance to pesticides. In fact some are completely immune.

In addition, our surface waters and food are polluted with pesticides. In Canada at the present time prices for certified organic products are fairly high and operational costs are low (no expensive pesticides or fertilizers). It would be economically prudent for governments to define objectives for certified organic production and subsidize organic agriculture rather than high input, high cost chemical agriculture. It would also help Canada to meet the environmental objectives they agreed to support at the International Environmental conference at Kyoto, Japan a few years ago.

As a result of our “chemical only” agriculture policies we are producing graduates with degrees in chemical agriculture. More progressive countries like Holland and Denmark have been graduating people in organic agriculture for many years.

We need to graduate agronomists that specialize in organic agriculture. Canada’s agriculture prosperity (if we ever regain it) will be based on marketing food products to countries that want quality food and can afford to buy it.

Certified organic production meets that criteria. We send people around the world to study all sorts of things. It is time to send a committee to study organic farming programs in Europe or elsewhere to figure out how to implement a successful one here. In fact the time is long over-due.

Elmer Laird, president  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

December 6, 1999 Davidson Leader

Dear Ms. Maude Barlow, volunteer chairwoman Council of Canadians

RE: World food security with responsible health and environmental policies.

The World Trade talks in Seattle, Wash. this week will be an environmental and health disaster unless you and the 50,000 other lobbyists can effectively change the direction of the trade negotiators from 135 countries.

Our present trade policies encourage preserving food so it will last forever. They also encourage shipping the food as far as possible to make maximum dollars out of shipping. The net effect means more greenhouse gases which is in direct conflict with the decisions made to reduce greenhouse gases at Kyoto, Japan a couple of years ago.

The food is so well preserved in many instances the human stomach is unable to get the nutrition out of the food when it is eaten.

You were in Saskatchewan the last week in November where everyone was talking about the financial crisis in agriculture. However, it is far more than a financial crisis, it is a system (for lack of a better word) and a food quality crisis. Saskatchewan today is an outstanding example of "what not to be". Here in Saskatchewan we have 43 per cent (of the cultivated land in Canada).

We have about a million people or 3.3 per cent) of the Canadian population and we can't feed ourselves, farmers included. More people are lining up at food banks all the time. In fact this fall to date, farmers from 71 communities in southern Saskatchewan have called at the Regina Food Bank at least once for food. Recent reports indicate that Canada's child poverty rate is second highest in the industrialized world. Here in Saskatchewan both farm men and women are working off the farm to pay farm expenses. They are driving an average of 50 miles per day one way to work. Calls to the Farm Stress Line have rapidly increased this season. More and more prepared foods are being used even on the farm.

We have a high-tech agriculture. We have all the technology we need and the ability to produce more sophisticated farm machinery if we want it. Cost of the technology including fertilizers and pesticides are exorbitant. We have highly skilled farmers to operate, service and repair the equipment. We have extensive federal and provincial research and extension services for chemical agriculture. Research and extension service for organic agriculture are practically non-existent. Both federal and provincial governments support chemical agriculture and only more recently genetically engineered or genetically modified food crops.

Both federal and provincial departments of agriculture are pouring big bucks into biotechnology in Saskatoon. They want to make it the biotechnology capital of the world. It is abundantly obvious the federal government is more interested in the survival of the chemical and biological companies than the family farm.

Saskatchewan soil and surface waters (our major potable water supply) are polluted with pesticide residues. Our food is polluted with pesticide residues and our air is polluted seven months a year during spraying season. We are using maximum amounts of growth hormones and antibiotics in animal and poultry production. Lineups for medical services are getting longer, our health-care system is stretched to the limit and



may collapse if we don't start cleaning up our soil, water, air and food. There is also great concern about violence in our schools.

More recently GE (genetically engineered) or GM (genetically modified) foods are threatening the security of our food supply. The pollen from GM plants may drift and pollute other plants, the potential effects are still unknown. We are told GM foods are necessary to feed the hungry world. This is not true, the main purpose of GM foods is to give transnational corporations control of the family farm and food production. Our income crisis is due to food quality. Europe will not buy GM foods, Japan doesn't want them. Here in Davidson high protein No. 1 wheat is worth \$3.37 per bushel at the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool elevator. High protein No. 1 certified organic wheat is selling direct to buyers for \$9 per bushel. Chemically grown flax is worth about \$5 per bushel (prices fluctuate) and certified organic flax is selling for \$19 per bushel. There is a rule in the world of commerce that is old as time — if you want to stay in business produce what the customer wants.

As a result of the long time use of toxic fertilizers and pesticides, soil microorganisms have been destroyed in many Saskatchewan soils and the soil's natural ability to restore its nutrients has been lost. This is our most serious form of soil erosion at the present time. There are also complaints from people living on tropical islands about the fact that toxic pesticide residues running out to sea are killing the fish population. It is amazing that the loss of Newfoundland's Northern Cod and British Columbia's Salmon is never related to toxic chemicals in rivers where fish spawn.

Present international trade policies, if accelerated as the transnational corporations hope to do at the Seattle conference, will accelerate the use of fossil fuels. Our transportation system is already disastrous to our environment.

International trade will always be important but first we need a policy of self-sufficiency so we feed ourselves first and ship surplus food to where it is needed, not only where they can afford it. We would like to recommend the Council of Canadians adopt and promote the following policies—trade policies to guarantee world food security:

1. International food policies should be for food self-sufficiency every where in the world at the farm level, the community level, the provincial level and national level, surpluses of food should be distributed to people who need it at a cost of what the traffic will bear.

2. We should eliminate the use of toxic chemical fertilizers and pesticides work with nature to revitalize our soils and produce exclusive certified organic crops.

3. We should produce livestock and poultry without growth hormones and antibiotics. They must be produced in a healthy environment so they have a healthy lifestyle.

It is time to start operating our planet in an environmentally manner.

Elmer Laird, president, Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

September 2000 *alive* #215

### Reporting on Pesticides

As far as consumers, environmentalists and organic farmers are concerned, the May report from the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development is the best report to come out of Ottawa in many years.

Entitled "Pesticides: Making the Right Choice for the Protection of Health and the Environment," this 212-page report is also of major interest to parents and grandparents who are concerned about the health of younger generations.

The environmental committee is presently chaired by the Honourable Charles Cascia, former federal minister of the environment. On page 184, the report recommends:

1. Tax incentives for organic agriculture. The government should develop an organic agriculture policy for the transition from pesticide-dependent farming to organic farming. This policy should include tax incentives, an interim support program during the transition period, technical support for farmers, the development of post-secondary organic farming programs and enhanced funding for research and development in organic farming.
2. A food-grading system. The committee recommends that the government work with industry to quickly put in place a certification organization for the Canadian National Organic Agriculture Standard. A labelling system should also be improved to provide consumers with better information on the intrinsic nutritional qualities of food products.
3. Organic agriculture research. The committee recommends that the government grant appropriate financial resources for research, teaching and information distribution in the organic agriculture sector.
4. Research into child vulnerability. The government should immediately develop and ensure adequate funding for a pesticides research program devoted specifically for child health. Research goals should focus on; the exposure of the fetus and the newborn to pollutants accumulated in the mother's body; the neurotoxic effects of pesticides; children's daily activities and their developmental and physiological characteristics.

On page 185, the report further recommends:

1. Gradual reduction of pesticides for esthetic purposes.
2. A national pesticide reduction protocol similar to what has been done in Europe and modelled on the National Packaging Protocol developed by the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment.
3. A new Pest Control Act that would prohibit the registration and re-registration of pesticides intended for cosmetic use.

4. The development of a strategy for the gradual phase-out of pesticides used for cosmetic purposes to be conceived by government in partnership with the provinces, territories and municipalities.

The time to clean up our environment and produce the healthiest food possible is long overdue. Our health-care system is in crisis and there isn't any doubt that pollution is attacking our immune systems and that we are becoming less able to cope with a growing number of illnesses.

To date, the above recommendations are just good recommendations. The environmental committee is going to require much political and public support to actually push the recommendations through to legislation. I urge everyone to obtain a copy of the report and circulate the information to friends, church and political associates, social clubs, labour unions and companions in a bar.

November 27, 2000 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:

Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, Conservative leader Joe Clark, Canadian Alliance leader Stockwell Day, Bloc Québécois leader Gilles Duceppe and NDP leader Alexa McDonough

Re: Developing co-ordinated agriculture, health and environmental policies.

There is an old barroom saying after you have your first drink. "Have another, you can't fly on one wing."

Well, you were all flying on one wing during the recent national election campaign and have been ever since. Everyone discussed and debated how you would restore the national health care program. However, you never related the health care program to a clean environment and pure healthy nutritious unpolluted food which are the fundamentals or foundation of good health.

I haven't seen a politician (except one Canadian Alliance candidate) in Davidson in the last two elections. I have heard of them making a quick trip through after they were here.

When an election is called, all party leaders get on a plane and travel from coast to coast continually. Periodically you land and make a brief statement based on the information your "handlers" and "pollsters" tell you what the issue is, but you have very little exchange of information with the average citizen.

Today, Nov. 27, Canadians elected 301 MPs. After Christmas you will convene in Ottawa and you will be exposed to the 4,000 plus registered lobbyists. So much for grass roots democracy.

Hippocrates (466 to 377 B.C.), who is known as the father of medicine said, "Let your food be your medicine and your medicine be your food." Everyone but NDP leader McDonough spent the very minimum amount of time in Saskatchewan. Day didn't even leave the airport on one occasion. Chrétien met with a selected group of farmer leaders and promised to discuss agricultural problems after the election. Everyone seemed to have a deep sense that farm problems in Saskatchewan are insurmountable and to avoid the issue was the best political solution at the time.

Here in Saskatchewan we are in an extremely serious health-environmental crisis situation. We have about a million people and 43 per cent of the cultivated land in Canada. We have a high-tech agriculture. We use more toxic pesticides than any other province. It is hard to get an accurate figure, but we use at least 20 million litres annually. Our growth industries are food banks (line ups get longer every year, we are unable to feed ourselves), cancer and gambling casinos.

The grandmothers in this small community tell me five babies have had cancer in the last year. One was born with cancer and operated on shortly after birth. Grandmothers are very concerned about the health of their families and neighbours. In developing a co-ordinated agriculture-health-environment policy, there are two groups in society that have made the decision and are leading the way. They are certified organic farmers, gardeners and consumers who buy and eat certified organic food.

However, there are two groups in society that you need to consider when developing future policy for agriculture-health-environment.

1. Consumers who buy and eat chemically produced food. The federal and all provincial governments are presently spending large sums of consumer and taxpayers' money to promote chemical agriculture. Saskatchewan spent only 0.48 per cent of its last agriculture budget on organic agriculture.

In addition, consumers are also buying large volumes of food polluted with toxic agriculture chemicals, they are drinking water and breathing air polluted with the same chemicals which is contributing to the health crisis. If you "bail out" chemical farmers so they can pay their chemical bills and avoid bankruptcy, it would certainly not be in the interest of the consumer, just more pollution.

2. Chemical farmers need support to make the transition to organic agriculture. The October 2000 edition of *Organic Food Business News* published a Altamonte Springs, Florida, reports that the United States government is going to spend \$10 million in 15 states to help farmers make the transition to organic agriculture. The funds will be limited to \$50,000 per farm.

Closer to home the May 2000 report of the Standing Committee on Environmental and Sustainable Development of the House of Commons entitled *Pesticides, Making the Right Choices* recommends on page 184 "tax incentives for organic agriculture". It also recommends an interim support program.

I think all political leaders should start listening to our House of Commons Environmental Committee and U.S. organic agriculture policy. Then perhaps we can have a national health care program that will survive.

Hippocrates was right. Quality food (certified organic) is our best medicine.

Have another drink, start flying on two wings and develop a balanced policy on agriculture, health and environment.

Elmer Laird, president,  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

January 22, 2001 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:

Elwin Hermanson, leader official opposition and Greg Brkich, MLA, Arm River:

Re: Revitalizing and repopulating rural Saskatchewan

I wrote a letter to Saskatchewan's Health Minister Pat Atkinson asking her to investigate the reasons five infants in the Davidson district have had cancer in the last year. I stopped at MLA Greg Brkich's office in Davidson to give him a copy of the letter. He said, "It's a good letter and I would like to see the Minister's reply when you receive one."

In the conversation I asked him what the Saskatchewan Party was going to do to revitalize and repopulate rural Saskatchewan when they were elected. He said they supported "value-added" programs. I said, value-added programs were for the business community, not for farmers. He said, "Nothing can be done for the farm community." He asked me what I would suggest.

On Wednesday, Jan. 17, Mr. Hermanson, you were a guest on Lindy Thorsen's phone-in program on CBC Radio One. I phoned in and asked the following question: "In 1991 the Mulroney government passed the *Plant Breeders Rights Act*. It gave transnational corporations the right to patent and control seed. The act is a violation of all our rights as Canadians. As a result Saskatchewan farmers are rapidly losing control of their farms and Canadians lost political control of all agriculture policy, programs, research and extension services because of the Act.

The question is: When you become premier what are you going to do to get the Plant Breeders Rights Act rescinded so family farmers can regain control of their farms and what are you going to do to revitalize and repopulate rural Saskatchewan?"

You indicated in your reply that you were not concerned about the *Plant Breeders Rights Act*. A mix of family and corporate farms was perhaps desirable and there was some savings in Plant Breeders Rights legislation. In fact you indicated that you support status quo in agriculture.

Mr. Hermanson, you didn't mention that Saskatchewan has 43 per cent of the cultivated land in Canada and three per cent of the population. We have a high tech agriculture and yet we can't feed ourselves. Farmers are lining up at food banks, they are also going bankrupt. In fact food banks are a growth industry in Saskatchewan. They grow about one per cent a year. Cancer and child poverty are also growth industries.

In answer to Mr. Brkich's question: What do you think we should do?

I would recommend:

1. The Saskatchewan Party if elected should launch a class-action lawsuit to challenge the Plant Breeders Rights Act in court if the federal government is not prepared to rescind the act.

2. In view of the fact that you do not have any plans to revitalize or repopulate rural Saskatchewan the Saskatchewan Party should set up a Royal Commission on the future of agriculture to travel rural Saskatchewan to find out what rural people think could and should be done. There is a precedent. In either 1952 or 1953 the Douglas government established the Royal Commission on Agriculture and Rural Life (it was

often referred to as the Baker Commission). It produced many recommendations and established the direction of agriculture policy for many years.

3a. The Saskatchewan Party should develop an organic agriculture program for all farmers. The Western Producer recently reported that 22 Canadian weeds are resistant to agriculture pesticides. In fact pesticides have been obsolete for a long time. Presently Saskatchewan's water, food and air are all polluted with toxic pesticides. If we clean up our environment it would lead to the revitalization and repopulation of rural Saskatchewan. If we had a clean environment and served only certified organic food, people would flock here from many of the world, particularly cities to enjoy a healthy lifestyle. Many urban areas are so polluted they haven't much hope of cleaning them up. Certified organic food is in great demand all over the world and we wouldn't have any marketing problems, just supply problems.

3b. The introduction of solar power and wind energy is long overdue, particularly on public buildings to reduce energy costs and taxes. The profits from high gas prices should be used to subsidize solar heat and wind energy in all areas of the province.

4. Well Mr. Hermanson, you frequently criticize the NDP government because our population is decreasing. The question that you should ask yourself is: Why should they stay in the polluted environment, and why are you not demanding that the NDP government should clean it up? It is obvious the NDP doesn't have a clean-up program and neither does the Saskatchewan Party. You continually worry about spending dollars and recommend cutting taxes.

Well Mr. Hermanson, if we cleaned up our environment and produced healthy food you could make a great reduction in the budget of the Department of Health when you become premier. After all Hypocrites said in about 400 B.C. "Let our food be our medicine and our medicine be our food." I would welcome the opportunity to discuss an environmental clean-up program with you and Mr. Brkich at your earliest convenience.

Elmer Laird, president,  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

May 28, 2001 Davidson Leader

Open letter to Premier Lorne Calvert, Health Minister John Nilson and Midwest District Health CEO Doug Ball:

RE: Response to the Fyke Commission on Medicare

Roots of Medicare

Saskatchewan is recognized as the birth place of Medicare. Fyke did not give any back ground or history in his report. The actual thrust or demand came from thousands of pioneer women who lived all over the province in the early days of settlement. Many had large families and they lived in unimproved homestead shacks, and sod and log houses. Their transportation was horse-drawn sleighs and buggies. They were in reality mother, doctor and nurse in the case of family illness. Many requests for health care were made through women's organizations and church groups. However, the main thrust was through the farm movement.

The Territorial Grain Growers were organized before -Saskatchewan became a province, then we had the Saskatchewan Grain Growers, the United Farmers of Canada, (Saskatchewan Section), the Saskatchewan Farmers Union and the National Farmers Union, all are family organizations and trace their roots back to the Territorial Grain Growers. All fought for health care in the first part of the century and continued to fight for it until it became a reality in 1962. In the early '30s the farm and labour movements joined politically to form the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF). Tommy Douglas, who be- came premier in 1944, gave political leadership to the demand for health care. However, he received strong support from both the farm and labour movements. In the 1930s various municipal medical plans were in place across the province. Finally in 1962 the government of CCF Premier Woodrow Lloyd passed the provincial Medicare act.

Just prior to the introduction of the bill, long-time Saskatchewan Premier Tommy Douglas (who gets credit for the National Medicare Program and should) resigned as premier of Saskatchewan. He went to Ottawa to lead the national New Democratic Party in Ottawa when it changed from CCF to NDP. He was instrumental in convincing the Pearson government to introduce and pass the national Medicare Act. However, we would not have a national Medicare program today without the support of the farm movement and particularly rural pioneer women who worked very hard for many years to achieve it.

Traditionally whenever agriculture is in a crisis federal political leaders decide the solution is to reduce the farm population so when the farm returns are divided among fewer people they should each get a larger share. In 1969 the Federal Task Force on Agriculture recommended that two-thirds of the farmers should leave the land. Present Agriculture Minister Lyle Vanclief is saying the same thing. Statistics Canada reports that in 1971 the number of farms in Canada was 366,110 and in 1996 it was 276,548. In 1971 the number of Saskatchewan farms was 76,970 and in 1996 it was 56,995.

Unfortunately, none of our Saskatchewan political parties support the family farm



anymore. They appear to think the simplest thing is to let the transnational corporations take over and it will reduce the demand for subsidies to farmers and services to rural Saskatchewan.

In military terms the policy they are practicing is “strategic withdrawal”. In support of government policy, Fyke is recommending we reduce the services to rural areas and rural residents will have to travel many more miles to get them. It will become almost impossible for senior citizens to continue to live in small town Saskatchewan with Fyke’s plan, particularly if they are low income.

Factors Fyke didn’t consider:

1. Food quality, nutrition, unpolluted air and water are fundamental to good health.

There are about 1,000 certified organic farmers in the province farming about a million acres of land. They are working hard to produce food that is nutritious and pollution free. Fyke, if he had been interested in food quality as fundamental to good health could have recommended that all hospitals serve certified organic food particularly to new mothers and infants, and patients who have chemical allergies to boost everyone’s health and reduce time spent in hospitals, and the cost of health care.

2. All universities should serve certified organic food in their cafeterias. Good food is fundamental to good health and university students as a foundation for their education should be introduced to certified organic food to maintain their health through life, particularly agriculture and medical students.

3. All school lunch programs should be cooked or prepared out of certified organic food. Specialists say that a child’s immune system isn’t fully developed until it is 12 to 14 years old. All toxicity research on agriculture chemicals which is our main pollutant in food is carried out on adults. Children are much more sensitive to pollutants.

4. The Saskatchewan government should serve certified organic food in the Legislative Cafeteria and the other three restaurants it operates in Regina to set an example to Saskatchewan residents, tourists, and foreign buyers the quality of food that can be produced in Saskatchewan. It could be financed under the “value added” program and wouldn’t cost MLAs anything. When the Canadian Organic Producers Marketing Co-operative Ltd. at Girvin was marketing a great variety of certified organic foods in the late 1980s, I attempted to sell certified organic food to the Legislative Cafeteria without any success. I telephoned the head chef of the cafeteria last Wednesday while writing this response to Fyke, the present chef didn’t know what certified organic food was and that it was available in Saskatchewan. MLAs usually make sure they are well looked after but obviously they don’t have any concerns about eating polluted food. (I hope Health Minister John Nilson takes appropriate action when he reads this response.)

5. Phase out the use of agricultural chemicals for all purposes.

6. Establish research facilities for non-toxic biological controls for all pests (bugs, grasshoppers, etc.) Other factors Fyke didn’t consider.

1. Environmental factors. The cost of energy is increasing and road conditions are deteriorating which is going to mean more expense for both the patient and family members to get to the source of health services.

2. Depopulating factors. Fyke’s proposals will force many of the descendants of the original homesteaders to move to urban areas because of the expense of

transportation, fewer people will be able to afford automobiles and there isn't any public transportation to small towns in many parts of the province.

3. Rosella Diduck of Kamsack is a chemical widow, she lost her husband because of his exposure to anhydrous ammonia. She lives on her farm at Kamsack in the summer and Calgary in the winter.

She says she meets young people in Calgary who are forced off farms and have a very difficult life in Calgary living in small apartments and sending their children to overcrowded schools. She said if they had been able to stay on the farm it could have - been a much more satisfactory lifestyle.

Well gentlemen, the proof of the need for nutritious and a clean environment comes from the life style demonstrated by the pioneer women. Early pioneers enjoyed a healthy lifestyle when they had a clean environment and nutritious wholesome food. I would welcome the opportunity to meet with any or all of you to discuss ways and means of providing nutritious unpolluted food and a clean environment for all Saskatchewan citizens.

Sincerely, Elmer Laird, president  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

December 3, 2001 Davidson Leader

Leader of the New Green Alliance Party of Saskatchewan Neil Sinclair of rural Saskatoon and seven other members from Regina and Saskatoon visited our research and demonstration farm Nov. 24. In the morning they looked at the Davidson water facilities and the sewage irrigation system and also discussed the water test we did last fall. They enjoyed a delicious certified organic pancake and sausage lunch at the Davidson Hotel at noon. In the afternoon they tried their skills at water witching. I asked Mr. Sinclair before they left if I could write a proposal for their agriculture platform.

Dear Mr. Sinclair,

Thank you for your invitation to write a proposal for an agriculture policy for the Saskatchewan Green Party. If I were a candidate in the next provincial election I would like to campaign for the following agriculture, health and environmental policies. The revitalization of rural Saskatchewan and the health of our citizens depends on the continuation, improvement and success of our health-care system. Pure unpolluted water and an ample supply of nutritious certified organic food is the foundation of any successful Medicare program. If we are elected we would make the Minister of Health the senior minister and the ministries of agriculture and environment would be junior ministries and directly responsible to the Minister of Health. This would guarantee that all agriculture and environmental policies were designed and executed in the interest of providing Saskatchewan citizens maximum opportunity to enjoy good health.

Our government would propose and support the following policies:

1. Introducing policies that will encourage farmers to grow the healthiest, most nutritious certified organic food possible.
2. Abandon the "agricultural chemical policies of the previous provincial governments.
3. Devote all agricultural research programs to soil improvement by using legumes and organic fertilizers to improve the soil, control weeds and pests.
4. Introduce policies that will develop self-sufficient farms and communities.
5. Subsidize the building of solar heated straw bale green houses to grow vegetables in all seasons, particularly in the winter to provide fresh certified organic food and create employment.
6. Amend the regulations governing the dairy industry so Saskatchewan citizens could enjoy unpasteurized fresh, certified organic whole milk. (It is presently available, shipped here from Quebec.)
7. Subsidize the growing of certified organic orchards of fruit that is native to Saskatchewan fresh for home consumption, canning, making jams, jellies and wine.
8. Develop research programs for fruit that isn't native to Saskatchewan to adapt it to this climate.
9. To encourage the production of certified organic food we would serve it in all government operated restaurants, in hospitals, universities, technical schools, and school lunch programs for the purpose of providing the healthiest food possible to students, patients and staff. Probably the most important single thing students could learn is to know what healthy food is. Our mothers and grandmothers used to do that when they fed us all the time. But that isn't happening today.

10. The department of health would appoint a negotiating committee to negotiate prices for certified organic food with representatives of certified organic farms.

11. The government would subsidize certified organic food to pregnant women, people who suffer from chemical allergies, school lunch programs, food banks, low income families and school milk programs.

12. Our government would establish a pollution tax on agriculture pesticides and other polluting activities that are unnecessary for the purpose of subsidizing certified organic food.

13. Our government would establish a sewage corporation to assist communities in the province to irrigate from their sewage lagoons to prevent the pollution of downstream water (like Davidson does).

14. Our government would convert rural service centres from chemical farming information centres to organic farming information centres.

15. Our government would establish a subsidized farm training program to give young people an opportunity to work or train on certified organic farms to prepare them to take over family farms.

16. Our government would establish a water testing program to identify water supplies that are not polluted with pesticide residues and other undesirable pollutants. We would also develop a program to protect the safe water supplies from pollution for the use of all Saskatchewan citizens.

Saskatchewan has long been recognized as the birth place of Medicare. The above agricultural policies are necessary to guarantee its success into perpetuity.

Elmer Laird, president,  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

February 18, 2002 Davidson Leader

Recommendations to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri Food on the topic of: The Future Role of the Canadian Government in Agriculture to be presented at the Public Hearing at the Davidson Community Centre, Feb. 19 at 10 a.m. by Elmer Laird, president of the Back to the Farm Research Foundation.

Mr. Chairperson and Members:

Welcome to Davidson, a rural community of 1,150 people situated approximately in the geographic centre of the farming area of Saskatchewan and also the three prairie provinces. Davidson is also in the geographical centre of the present war zone. The war I refer to is the war between the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate (SOD), representing all certified organic farmers in the province and the transnational corporations, Monsanto and Aventis, to decide who controls agriculture. The weapon is GMO canola and wheat. Arnold Taylor, president of SOD will update you on the war or class action.

Previously unheard of terrorist activities are also being carried out by Robinson Investigations of Saskatoon on behalf of Monsanto. They inspect farmers' fields for Round-up Ready Canola Round-up Ready without the farmers' permission; they drop chemical bombs in farmers' fields without permission to determine the variety of canola. Percy Schmeiser, Bruno farmer who won the Mahatma Gandhi award for taking non-violent action to protect farmers' rights to save their own seed, will fill you in on Monsanto's terrorist activities.

Vice-president Don Robertson and I are veterans of the Second World War. This certainly isn't the kind of freedom we fought for and it is a violation of all farmers' and market gardeners' rights.

### **Recommendations**

1. The federal government must rescind Plant Breeders Rights legislation and ban GMO and demand labelling for all GMO foods coming into Canada.

In this age of globalization the transnational corporations are rapidly gaining control of all our institutions including the family farm. The federal government must restore and preserve the rights of family farmers to control the management and all operations on their farms.

2. The federal government must take action to return democratic and political control of all federal agriculture programs to the Canadian taxpayer.

For example, many research programs are financed on a 50-50 basis, this means 50 per cent by the Canadian taxpayer and 50 per cent by the transnational corporations. Organic farmers cannot afford the 50 per cent, so very little research is done on organic farming. The transnationals want chemical research done. Consumers, taxpayers and organic farmers are the big losers.

3. The federal government must take steps to provide the farming community with energy efficient, environmentally friendly, safe transportation services.

4. The federal government must introduce environmental cleanup programs to clean up our water, food and air for people, livestock, poultry and wildlife.

Pure unpolluted water is the foundation of good health for all species on this planet. Here in Saskatchewan all our surface water supplies are polluted with herbicides and also one-third of our wells. Our citizens are eating lots of polluted food (not many certified stores) and our air is polluted seven months of the year. Saskatchewan has the highest rate of breast and cervix cancer and the second highest rate of prostate cancer in Canada. Saskatchewan uses one-third of the pesticides used in Canada. There is little doubt that pesticides are the main cause of cancer. We have over 40 per cent of the cultivated land, one billion people and the lineups at the food banks are getting longer.

5. The federal government must introduce policies that will encourage farmers to grow the most nutritious certified organic food possible.

The federal government can accomplish the above goal by accepting the recommendations of the May 2000 report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development entitled Pesticides—Making the Right Choices for the Protection of Health and Environment that recommends among many other things, subsidizing chemical farmers to move to organic agriculture—see page 184—Tax Incentives for Organic Agriculture. 6. The federal government should devote agriculture research programs to soil improvement by intercropping, using legumes, composting and organic fertilizers or using the science of allelopathy.

The federal government should:

- Introduce policies that will develop self-sufficient farms and communities;
- Subsidize the building of solar heating straw bale greenhouses to grow vegetables in all seasons, particularly in the winter to provide fresh certified organic food, to create employment and to reduce energy used transporting food from California and Florida;
- Subsidize the growing of certified organic orchards of fruit that are native to Saskatchewan fresh for home consumption, canning making jams, jellies, wines, etc.;
- Develop research programs for fruit that isn't native to Saskatchewan to adapt to this climate;
- Encourage the production of certified organic food. We should serve it in all government-operated restaurants, in hospitals, universities, technical schools and school lunch programs for the purpose of providing the healthiest food possible to students, patients and staff. Probably the most important single thing students could learn is to know what healthy food is. Our mothers and grandmothers used to do that when they fed us all the time, but that isn't happening today;
- The Department of Health should appoint a negotiating committee to negotiate prices for certified organic food with representatives of certified organic farmers for needy people;
- Subsidize certified organic food to pregnant women, people who suffer from chemical allergies, school lunch programs, food banks, low income families and school milk programs;
- Establish a pollution tax on agriculture pesticides and other polluting activities that are unnecessary for the purpose of paying for certified organic food; and
- The Canadian Wheat Board should direct market all certified organic cereal grain (no buy back).

The provincial government should:

- Establish a sewage corporation to assist communities in the province to irrigate from their sewage lagoons to prevent the pollution of downstream water going into other communities potable water supplies and conserve water; Davidson has used all lagoon water for irrigation since 1973;
- Convert rural service centres from chemical farming information centres to organic farming information centres;
- Establish a subsidized farm training program to give young people an opportunity to work or train on certified organic farms to prepare them to take over family farms; and
- Establish a water-testing program to identify water supplies that are not polluted with pesticide residues and other undesirable pollutants. We would also develop a program to protect the same water supplies from pollution for the use of Saskatchewan citizens.

### **Conclusion**

Saskatchewan has long been recognized as the birth place of Medicare.

The above agricultural policies are necessary to guarantee its success into perpetuity.

If the above policies were introduced, it would revitalize and repopulate rural areas with thousands of people who are looking for environmentally safe places to live.

February 25, 2002 Davidson Leader

Life is full of surprises.

Four of them happened to me the week of Feb. 10-16. The first and most amazing one was the fact that Premier Lorne Calvert cut his trade trip to Russia short to take part in BioFach 2002 Organic Trade Fair at Nuremberg, Germany. Premier Calvert is the first premier in Canada to support the marketing of certified organic products. In fact I am not aware of political leaders in any other part of the world supporting organic marketing to date.

He met with Saskatchewan producers, their international contacts, other Canadian companies and representatives from the Canadian Consulate in Düsseldorf to support Saskatchewan's organic industry and its global marketing efforts.

Calvert said, "Our organic industry is a success story in rural diversification and commend the producers who are here for their foresight and commitment.

International contacts are critical to their continued success and here they are, front and centre, making contacts that will grow their business and the economy of Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan is well suited for organic agriculture. It has the largest number of organic producers in Canada, numbering over 1,000. The province is also the leading Canadian exporter of organic grain and oilseed products and cereal-based food ingredients, with Europe as a major destination. BioFach 2002 is the key international venue for organic and natural products producers; processors of raw materials, convenience foods, grains, seeds, pulses, herbs and spices; and organic farming associations, processors' associations and health food suppliers." Eleven companies marketing certified organic products attended the Nuremberg trade fair.

The second surprise was the fact that I was given an opportunity to take part in a conference call with other journalists where we interviewed Premier Calvert at Nuremberg Feb. 16. I had phoned the Premier's office the day before to ask for a copy of the press release on the upcoming press conference. Carey Robertson (originally from Liberty) provided me with the number to dial to take part in the press conference.

When I got a chance to talk to him I congratulated Premier Calvert on his support for marketing certified organic products. I asked him when he got home if he was going to make certified organic food available to Saskatchewan people who needed it, for example pregnant women, people with chemical allergies or environmental illness, hospitals, universities, government operated restaurants (The House of Commons is serving organic food), school lunch programs, food banks and low-income families.

The third surprise was when he said that it would be up to the individual.

The fourth surprise was also a pleasant one.

In an article by Kevin O'Connor of the Leader Post Calvert said, "We need to proceed with great caution when it comes to the introduction of GM wheat. However, it's not within the provincial government's jurisdiction to ban the environmental crop from Saskatchewan."

The article goes on to say:

*Although GM wheat hasn't been approved for commercial use in Canada, it's being grown in test plots in Saskatchewan and other provinces. With genetic modification, wheat can be given new traits, such as herbal resistance."*



*Calvert said although federal regulators have assured the public the test plots are secure, he's disturbed by news reports suggesting that GM material could be scattered by tornadoes.*

*"My view is we need to work very closely with Agriculture Canada and the research side to be very, very careful," Calvert.*

*Some farm groups are concerned that if some farmers grow GM wheat, it could destroy the industry's export market.*

*Wheat exports are worth about \$1.4 billion to Saskatchewan annually.*

*Asked the province would move to block expansion of GM wheat, Calvert said: "It's not within our jurisdiction, it's my understanding, to rule on this. It falls under the federal government."*

*Among those opposed to GM wheat are the province's organic food growers.*

*One group, the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate, is asking for a court injunction against the release of GM wheat.*

*Saskatchewan has the largest number of organic producers in Canada.*

*Calvert said he sees great potential for expanding organic food trade to Germany after touring BioFach 2002 in Nuremberg last week.*

*"I want to bring back the knowledge that I've gained here that there is a fast-growing European market that already accepts Saskatchewan products and values Saskatchewan products," he said.*

*Some 11 Saskatchewan organic producers and organizations were at the trade fair, promoting everything from wild rice to boar meat.*

*Another interesting activity at the fair was that the Nuremberg Fair Board was holding a raffle. The lucky winner of first prize was a trip for two to LaRonge, Saskatchewan to see the Wild Rice Harvest and visit the LaRonge Wild Rice Processing facilities. The processing plant employs about 20 people.*

May 20, 2002 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:

The Hon. Lyle Vanclief, Federal Minister of Agriculture,  
The Hon. Lorne Calvert, Premier, Government of Saskatchewan  
The Hon. Clay Serby, Agriculture Minister, Province of Saskatchewan

Dear Gentleman,

Using the proposed \$1.3 billion subsidy to help conventional farmers convert to organic farming is the only way.

The only logical and political popular reason to make a subsidy payment at this time is to help chemical farmers convert to certified organic farming. There is no use complaining and whining about the recent American farm bill and how it hurt the Canadian agriculture industry. They have the right as a nation to take legislative action to protect their farmers and so has Canada. Incidentally, the American farm bill covers a wide range of agriculture problems which includes food stamps for poor people and school lunch programs in depressed areas.

Canadian political leaders have a responsibility to develop farm policy that will work in the interest of all Canadians rather than waste all their energy criticizing the American farm bill. There are a great many politically popular reasons to provide a subsidy to convert Canadian chemical agriculture to certified organic agriculture and there is also money available to do it. What are you waiting on?

### **Reason 1**

The government has for years spent large volumes of money on research and extension to promote chemical agriculture. All the while our food, water and air is becoming increasingly more polluted with pesticides. Dr. Allan Cessna with the National Hydrology Water Institute (Environment Canada) says that all the surface water he has tested is polluted with herbicides and about a third of the wells. Taxpayers are becoming increasingly more aware that they are paying big bucks for the promotion of chemical agriculture and are eating increasingly more polluted food (unless they can find certified organic.)

### **Reason 2**

The House of Commons standing committee on Environment and Sustainable Development in the year 2000 report entitled "Pesticides, Making the right choices for the Protection of Health and the Environment", under the heading Tax Incentives for Organic Agriculture, on page 184, proposed:

"The committee recommends that the government develop an organic agriculture policy for the transition from pesticide-dependent farming to organic farming. This policy should include tax incentives, an interim support program during the transition period, technical support for farmers, the development of post secondary organic farming programs and enhanced funding for research and development (R&D) in organic agriculture."

Under the heading of “Food Grading System” it said:

The Committee recommends that the government work with industry to quickly put in place a certification organization for the Canadian National Organic Agriculture Standard.

The Committee recommends that the food labelling system be improved to provide consumers with better information on the intrinsic nutritional qualities of food products.

On “Organic research”, it said:

The Committee recommends that the government grant appropriate financial resources for research, teaching and information distribution in the organic agriculture sector.

The committee recommends that the government create research chairs in organic agriculture.

The committee recommends that, within six months of the tabling of the government response to the present report, a special committee composed of members of the Standing Committees on Environment and Sustainable Development, Agriculture and Agri-Food, and Foreign Affairs and International Trade be formed to conduct an in-depth study inorganic agriculture in the domestic and the international context and to make recommendations to government.

### **Reason 3**

On the morning of May 14, 2002, C.B .C. Radio news reported on a report just released that was authorized out by federal, provincial and territorial ministries of health three years ago. The C.B.C. news reporter stated that there was grave concern about food and water testing in Canada and testing procedures were not adequate to protect the health of Canadians.

### **Reason 4**

If we move to certified organic production and eliminate pesticide pollution of water, food and air we will eliminate the high cost of promoting chemical agriculture and the ever increasing cost to test for the pollutants in food, water and air.

### **Reason 5**

Chemical agriculture is obsolete. Both weeds and pests have built up a resistance to chemicals. About a year ago the Western Producer reported that 22 weeds in Canada were resistant to herbicide, 450 around the world.

### **Reason 6**

Probably the most important reason is the fact that the world is hungry for certified organic food. Certified organic grains, oil seeds, legumes, poultry, hogs and cattle are all selling at about three times the price of chemically produced foods. Federal and Provincial governments have a policy to support “value added” agriculture. Marketing certified organic food certainly meets the criteria. Mr. Calvert, you supported marketing certified organic food when you were in Nuremberg, Germany last spring on your way home from Russia, have you forgotten.

**Reason 7**

Canadians need certified organic food, pure unpolluted air and water as a foundation for their National Medicare Program. It will provide a solid foundation that will continue a long time into the future if you act now, otherwise Medicare is in jeopardy.

**Reason 8**

Transnational corporations are rapidly taking control of agriculture. If we move to certified organic agriculture it will restore the family farm to the dominating system of agriculture production where it should be.

**Reason 9**

Remember the head chef in the House of Commons is attempting to provide a certified organic diet for members of parliament. He complains because he doesn't have enough organic food for a full menu. He only can have two items on the daily menu for Members of Parliament. If you are concerned about what you eat, go organic.

Elmer Laird, President  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

September 2, 2002 Davidson Leader

Open Letter to:  
The Rt. Hon. Joe Clark, Leader Progressive Conservative Party

Dear Mr. Clark,

Re: P.C. Agriculture Policy

I have just returned from the National P.C. Conference (Aug. 22-24, 2002) at Edmonton, Alberta. I was a delegate representing Regina, Lumsden Lake Centre. I was very impressed with the spirit and enthusiasm of the convention delegates in many of the discussions. I attended and took part in both the health and environmental caucuses. However, I was disappointed there was nothing on agriculture. Frequently in your several speeches you use the term "citizens want to stand for what this party stands for." However, I returned home not knowing any more about your agriculture policy than when I left home. Perhaps I should introduce myself. I am a 78-year-old farmer. I retired two years ago after 55 years of farming, the first three and the last 32 were organic. I am also president of The Back To The Farm Research Foundation. Our research foundation was sponsored by Local 614 of the National Farmers Union in 1973. Until two years ago we were a farm policy organization. On March 6, 2000 I leased my farm to the Back To The Farm Research Foundation and we now have the first certified organic research and demonstration farm in Canada. (I gave both you and your wife my card at the conference.)

I would like to draw your attention to some of the questions I have about farm policy. Agriculture is in a greater crisis today than it was in the 1930s when I was going to school.

**Question 1) Does the P.C. Party support the family farm?**

Probably you are not aware of it but Canadian farms are threatened with the possibility of being taken over by transnational corporations. None of the political parties represented in the House of Commons with the exception of the Bloc Quebecois support the family farm. They may support the family farm as a basic unit of agriculture production but I would not be aware of it living in Saskatchewan. It appears that all parties have accepted the fact the corporations will take over family farms and are just waiting for it to happen.

**Question 2) Are you prepared to rescind *The Plant Breeders Rights Act*?**

Your predecessor, the Rt. Hon. Brian Mulroney's government passed *The Plant Breeders Rights Act* which gives transnational corporations the right to develop and patent their own seed and exploit farmers by charging them royalties if they use the seed. This is a direct violation of farmers' basic rights to save their own seed which farmers have enjoyed all over the world for all time. Bruno, Sask. Farmer Percy Schmeiser received the Mahatma Ghandi award from the Government of India for fighting for farmers rights to save their own seed in a non-violent way in Oct. 2000. Prior to 1991 when *The Plant Breeders Rights Act* was passed we had an excellent system of plant breeding where Agriculture Canada and University Plant Breeders developed new varieties of seed to meet farmers needs. Some of the wheat varieties developed over the

years were sawfly resistant, rust resistant, higher yielding and mature in a shorter growing season to name a few. Today we have absolutely no confidence in our corporation's GMO plant breeding system.

**Question 3) Do you reject the introduction of GMO (Genetically Engineered) wheat?**

It appears that all federal political parties and provincial governments support the introduction of GMO wheat has nothing to do with feeding people. It is designed to help transnational chemical companies gain control of the family farm. In fact farmers do not have any assurance that it has any of the very important characteristics that I listed in the last paragraph that scientists have developed over the years. Several transnational corporations introduced GMO canola. The pollen has drifted and polluted many canola fields and as a result certified organic farmers and many others will lose their canola export market. Europe and Japan particularly don't want any GMO canola product or a canola product that is polluted with GMO canola. Saskatchewan's certified organic farmers have decided to take class action under the banner of the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate against the transnational corporations Monsanto and Adventis. (Enclosed is a copy of their press release on Jan. 10, 2002.)

**Question 4) Will you abandon the pesticide promotion policies of the Federal Government when you form a government?**

Pesticides were developed for biological warfare in World Wars I and II. They are obsolete. *The Western Producer* (farm paper) reported last winter that 22 weeds in Canada were resistant to herbicides. Dr. Allan Cessna, National Hydrology Water Institute, Federal Environment, reports that all Saskatchewan surface waters he has tested (and that is his job) and half of the deep wells are polluted with herbicides. Most of our food (except certified organic) is polluted with pesticides. Here in Saskatchewan we have the highest rate of breast cancer and cervical cancer in Canada and the second highest rate of prostate cancer. We also use one third of the pesticides used in Canada. Liane Casten of Chicago, who is the author of the 1996 book, *Breast Cancer, Poisons, Profits and Prevention* is a prize winning Environmental Journalist. She told a Davidson audience on July 5, 2002, "P.B.C.'s, D.D.T. and Dioxin and most chlorine based chemicals are directly connected. Along with nuclear radiation these pollutants cause 70 per cent of all breast cancer in women.

**Question 5) Will you subsidize all farmers to convert to organic farming when the P.C.'s become the next government?**

The House of Commons standing committee on the environment (year 2000) report entitled *Pesticides: Making the Right Choices for the Protection of Health and Environment* recommends that all farmers should be subsidized to make the transition to organic farming. Many mothers and grandmothers today are becoming increasingly more concerned about the polluted world their children and grandchildren are growing up in. Subsidizing farmers to make the transition would certainly increase P.C. political support of women right across Canada.

**Question 6) Would the P.C. Party immediately draft National Organic Certification Standards if elected?**

The Liberal government have done absolutely nothing about national certification standards for organic farmers. In fact most or maybe all of the 1000 certified organic farmers in Saskatchewan are certified by the United States Department of Agriculture. If

they were not they wouldn't be able to sell their products into the international market place.

**Question 7) Will you use only certified organic foods in the restaurants of the House of Commons if elected?**

At the Edmonton convention I asked both you, Mr. Clark and M.P. Elsie Wayne, long time member from New Brunswick if you were enjoying the organic food in restaurants of the House of Commons. Neither of you were aware of it. I asked the head chef of the House of Commons about a month ago if he was serving organic food. He said there were two items on the menu. If you started serving all organic food in the House of Commons it would be excellent publicity for Canada's food industry from business people, politicians and tourists from all over the world who visit Ottawa. I hope you seriously give the above questions your immediate attention when developing your agriculture policy for the next election. I will mail all the candidates a copy of this letter when they throw their hat in the ring.

David Orchard, Borden, Saskatchewan, certified organic farmer hasn't declared himself a candidate yet. Whether he does or not I would certainly recommend that he chairs the agriculture policy committee.

Elmer Laird, President  
Back To The Farm  
Research Foundation

October 7, 2002 Davidson Leader

**Bladworth farmer penalized for not spraying grasshoppers**

Open letter to:

The Hon. Clay Serby, Agriculture Minister  
Province of Saskatchewan Dear Mr. Serby,

Re: Penalty Saskatchewan Penalty of \$1080 Saskatchewan Crop Insurance levied against Bladworth farmer Paul Chomyshen for not spraying grasshoppers in 2002 crop season.

In an article in the September 9, 2002, edition of *The Davidson Leader* entitled "Crop insurance doesn't pay if farmer hasn't sprayed", journalist Travis Watt reported on an interview with Arm River M.L.A., Greg Brkich. Brkich said "The NDP is unfairly reducing crop insurance coverage for farmers who have not sprayed their crops for grasshoppers." He went on to say "In June we didn't have a grasshopper problem. It was drought that caused the crop insurance claim, not grasshoppers. Drought finished off most of the crop. When Mr. Chomyshen didn't have a crop, spraying would have just added to the expense."

I certainly agree with Mr. Brkich. I think you must be aware of low farm income and the drought, Mr. Serby. As a farmer, taxpayer and environmentalist I really object to policies that promote the use of chemicals particularly for no reason.

As you are probably aware, I have been an organic farmer for over 30 years. I sprayed for grasshoppers in 1949 and 1961 when we had severe infestations. In 1949 I got my seed back and in 1961 I harvested about five bushels to the acre. I know from experience when a drought hits Saskatchewan, pesticides are not going to solve anything, particularly control grasshoppers. All it does is reduce your bank account further, if you have one.

Chomyshen farms with his father and brother in the Bladworth community. He had 560 acres of wheat, 160 acres of barley, 150 acres of canola and 20 acres of oats this year on his own land. Crop Insurance deducted \$1080 on his canola payment or the equivalent insurance coverage of one bushel (7.14) per acre.

I am surprised that Saskatchewan Crop Insurance officials don't check weather records when making these decisions. However, when the chips are down, your government supports chemical agriculture only. It is obvious that when you are faced with a decision you are going to come down on the side of chemical companies before the farmers. At one time the old C.C.F. and the NDP supported both the farm and chemical agriculture. Now it is evident that you support only corporate farming by your support of corporate hog factories instead of family farms. Farmers in the U.S. have biological controls for agriculture. U.S. farmers are presently using a product called *Nosema Locustae* to control grasshoppers. It can be used safely on pasture land where the grasshopper infestations start to build up and is a non-toxic control. If *Nosema Locustae* was available it would only have to be used once, it even carries over the winter in the grasshopper eggs. I think your government should have learned from this experience and take steps to get it licensed by Canada Agriculture so it can be used next year and in future years.



Mr. Chomyshen sprayed numerous times for grasshoppers in the drought of 1988 and found it didn't do any good. I am surprised your advisors are not aware of how useless pesticides are in drought. Perhaps they should talk to farmers in drought areas.

Well, Mr. Serby, I think you should seriously consider returning Mr. Chomyshen \$1080. Remember, it won't be very long until the next provincial election, and you may want some rural votes. Saskatchewan farmers that I meet are not at all pleased with your policies.

Elmer Laird, President Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

December 16, 2002 Davidson Leader

### **Adding to Chretien's legacy**

Open letter to:  
The Right Honourable Jean Chretien, Prime Minister  
Government of Canada

RE: Proposal for your legacy

The Dec. 11, 2002 edition of the Leader Post reports that the Canadian parliament passed Kyoto protocol and you will have it signed by the end of the year. I am writing to congratulate you on your accomplishment and I know this will be a significant part of your legacy. I am also writing to make a further proposal that would add to your legacy, perhaps even more than the Kyoto accord. Perhaps I should explain —

The Nov. 9, 2002 edition of the Manitoba Co-operator (farm weekly) contains an article by journalist Ron Friesen entitled "Corporate Agriculture Destroying Communities, Conference Told". Friesen was reporting on the "Agriculture Renewal Alliance conference that was held recently at Brandon, Manitoba. John Ikerd, a University of Missouri emeritus professor told the conference, "Agriculture systems should be ecologically sound, economically viable and socially responsible." He criticized modern industrial agriculture for being none of these things and dehumanizing people instead.

Ikerd went on to say, "Multinational food corporations are starting to collapse under their own weight. Dole Pineapple is pulling out of Hawaii, abandoning large tracks of land contaminated with fertilizer and pesticides. The company is letting local farmers lease land for free in the hope they will eventually restore the soil to good health." Ikerd said, "People are starting to reject the corporate approach to agriculture and starting to follow alternative models."

I sincerely hope your government decides to reject the corporate approach to agriculture. Corporations are designed to make money, not to be concerned about soil conservation. In fact, they pour investments dollars into a project until it quits making money and when it starts losing, they abandon it. It is obvious that Dole Pineapple was not incorporated to conserve the soil. Here in Canada the federal and provincial governments are becoming increasingly more dominated by transnational pesticide and drug corporations and in most instances have completely abandoned their support for the family farm. It is very obvious (particularly to certified organic farmers) that the federal and Saskatchewan governments support chemical agriculture only.

I would like to propose —

1. That you abandon your policies to support chemical (pesticide) agriculture only,
2. That you rescind the Plant Breeders Act which allows transnational corporations the right to control a farmer's supply of seed, and to exercise increasingly more control over farms and agriculture policy,

3. In the year of 2000 the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development chaired by the Hon. Charles Caccia produced a 211 page report entitled "Pesticides, Making the Right Choice, For the Protection of Health and the Environment". I am requesting that you implement the following recommendation on page 184, it is entitled Tax incentives for Organic Agriculture. It states, "The committee recommends that the government develop an organic agriculture policy for the transition from pesticide- dependent farming to organic farming. This policy should include tax incentives, an interim support program during the transition period, technical support for farmers, the development of post-secondary organic farming programs and enhanced funding for research and development (R&D) in organic agriculture."

In a news story in the Dec. 11, 2002 edition of the Leader Post you, Mr. Prime Minister are quoted as saying following your success with the Kyoto Accord, "You know, I have the NDP, I have all the Liberal Party, I have the Bloc even (Alberta Premier Ralph) Klein, now that he is flexible, so it is a great day for Canada, it's a great day for the environment and it's a great day for the future of our kids. They all want pure (unpolluted) water and air and certified organic food. In fact, it's a great day for the mothers and grandmothers of the kids."

I wish you well and I know if you pass the above recommendations "Tax Incentives For Organic Agriculture" you will be able to repeat the above quote with even more pride and enthusiasm. I am sending a copy of this letter to the Hon. Lyle Vanclief, Federal Minister of Agriculture, the Hon. Lorne Calvert, Premier, and the Hon. Clay Serby, Minister of Agriculture for Saskatchewan in hopes they will support your efforts.

Seasons greetings.  
Elmer Laird, president  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

March 3, 2003 Davidson Leader

**Calvert could learn a few things from Castro**

Open letter to:

The Hon. Lorne Calvert, Premier

Province of Saskatchewan Dear Mr. Calvert

Re: Keeping Saskatchewan citizens in Saskatchewan

I spent 11 days this month in Cuba, seven days, Feb. 2 - 9 on an organic farm tour directed by MacQueens Tours of Prince Edward Island. You and Premier Castro share a common problem. He is working hard to keep Cubans in Cuba and you want to keep Saskatchewan citizens in Saskatchewan. High wages and high value of the American dollar are the big attractions that draw Cubans to the U.S. Everyone has heard news reports about Cubans losing their lives crossing the channel in inadequate boats between Cuba and Florida. Some spend awhile in the U.S. and then return to Cuba because their roots are there. Others stay in the U.S.

I think it would be very useful for you and some of your advisors to visit Cuba and compare notes with Castro and also seek his advice. His program to keep Cubans in Cuba is well worth considering.

I think everyone is aware of the collapse of the communist system in Russia in 1989. Prior to 1989 Cuba and Russia were trading partners on a large scale. Following the collapse of the communist system in Russia the Castro government decided they had to go "all out" not only to help Cuba survive as a nation but also to make Cubans proud of their country and it's programs that are designed to help Cubans survive in a healthy and fulfilling way.

*Cuba's Agriculture Policy*

1. Move to organic agriculture.

Cuba's National Agriculture Policy is to move Cuba to organic agriculture as soon as possible.

2. Establish Agriculture Research Stations to help farmers make the transition.

The Cuban Government has established 250 agriculture research stations all over Cuba to help farmers make the transition to organic agriculture as quickly as possible.

3. People before profits policy.

Cuba has a policy to put the interest of people (citizens) before profits. For example, they are establishing vegetarian restaurants all over Cuba that serve a wide range of organic vegetables and fruits where citizens can eat at very nominal prices to upgrade their diets. Previously their food staples have been rice and beans. However, the Cuban government realizes that good organic vegetables and fruits are a foundation that will make their National Medicare successful, (unfortunately, our Canadian and Saskatchewan governments haven't recognized that pure unpolluted air and water and certified organic food should be the foundation of our Canadian Medicare program. Fortunately their climate permits the growing of vegetables every month of the year. There are vegetable gardens everywhere. In the centre of their capital city Havanna, we saw a large three or

four acre vegetable garden growing lettuce, tomatoes and cabbage. On one occasion our 'tour' enjoyed one of the vegetarian lunches.

4. Re-establishing or settling Cuban citizens in rural areas.

They are encouraging Cuban citizens to move to rural areas by finding land and helping them build houses on it and start working at agriculture production.

5. University of Havana has free diploma classes in organic farming.

The University of Havana has a free diploma course and a two month short course in organic farming. The short course is also free to citizens of any country, however it is taught in Spanish.

6. Farmers can now sell a portion of their production.

Previously farmers worked for wages and turned all their production over to the government. Now under new policies they are able to sell a portion of their production and pocket the returns.

7. Government researchers are producing biological pesticides.

In a research station we visited in Havana we saw biological production of pesticides taking place. The pesticide is made from the Neem Tree, a rapidly growing wide leaf tropical plant that grows all over Cuba.

8. Earthworms and bacteria are used to help compost waste.

We saw composting programs in many parts of the country. They are using earthworms and bacteria for composting as they move away from chemical nitrogen fertilizer to organic compost for fertilizer.

9. Moving to self-sufficient communities.

They are growing food in communities in a way that makes the community self-sufficient. Food doesn't have to be transported very far to meet the community's needs. Surpluses that are not required to meet the needs of the community are transported to larger centres.

10. Cuba wins the Alternative Nobel Prize in 1999.

In 1999 the Alternative Nobel Prize went to a Cuban organization promoting the organic revolution, The Right Livelihood Award, commonly known as the Alternative Nobel Prize. They were chosen from 80 candidates in 40 countries.

Cuba has a free education system including university. It has a free Medicare program and free drugs for low income people and a very nominal charge for drugs for other citizens who have better incomes.

Saskatchewan is fortunate to have many resources such as oil, potash, coal, timber, uranium and salt to help finance their programs for people such as Medicare and education. Cuba relies on tourism. They are making a major effort to develop their tourist industry. In 1994 when they got their tourism program underway they had 200,000 tourists and by 2001 they had 2,000,000 or 10 times as many. Tourists enjoy staying in beautiful government owned hotels, managed by European managers and staffed by Cubans. They are eating fresh grown, mostly organic foods, drinking Cuban produced rum and beer and enjoying the great outdoors and the beautiful countryside.

Cubans have very low incomes and are drawn to the United States because of the larger incomes in Florida, a short distance away. However, as a result of the Castro government's progressive policies they believe that in five or 10 years they will be as well off as the Americans in Florida, and most of them are prepared to stay so they will enjoy a better life a few years down the road. I really think Mr. Calvert that a trip to Cuba

for you and your policy advisors would be a very valuable experience. Then you and your government can develop programs that will convince Saskatchewan citizens there will be better days ahead if they stay here.

Elmer Laird, President  
Back to The Farm  
Research Foundation

September 8, 2003 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:  
Premier Lorne Calvert

Re: Farm Policy for Election

Perhaps it would be good election strategy if you didn't call a provincial election until next spring if you want to get some of the farm votes. Traditionally, both the CCF and the NDP supported the family farm as the basic unit of agriculture production since the CCF were elected in 1944. However, over the years as we have moved into the era of globalization you have gradually moved over to support the transnational chemical and drug corporations and stood idly by as they have gained more and more control of the family farm.

In regard to GMOs the Aug. 8 edition of the *LeaderPost* carried an article by Jason Warick. He reported the following statement by Jim Stalwick, manager of the Strategic Planning Unit, Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture, speaking on behalf of the government. He said, "GMO wheat should not be approved until all market concerns are addressed and also the agronomic and environmental concerns as well. In an article by the same writer in the Aug. 9 edition of the *StarPhoenix* said "The federal Department of Agriculture is also a partner with Monsanto on GM wheat development and stands to make millions in royalties if it is approved". If your government supported the family farm as the basic unit of agriculture production you would be very vocal about federal agriculture and Monsanto teaming up to exploit family farmers.

The NDP downslide away from supporting the family farm started in 1995 when Premier Roy Romanow legislated the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool into a corporation. It was the largest grain handling co-operative in the world and the Romanow government changed it into a small corporation. That was the first major signal of your diminishing support of the family farm. Since then you have started to finance the building of huge hog barns that are polluting our environment and producing bottom of the line quality of pork.

The chemical lobby has got you cornered and you are not even prepared to fight back. Your government has a policy to support chemical agriculture only and the same chemical lobby controls both federal and provincial agriculture.

Last summer I wrote three long letters to former Premier Roy Romanow, recommending that pure water, air and certified organic food should be the foundation of any new Medicare program. I got three very precise well-written letters back rejecting the idea. It is obvious that Mr. Romanow is restricted by the "chemical only" agriculture policies of the federal government and would have to reject my proposal to be able to get the \$15 million federal dollars that was spent on his study.

The same thing applies to provincial government staff in agriculture and medicine. I don't hear any of them warning Saskatchewan citizens about our water and food that is polluted with pesticides. Dr. Allan Cessna of the National Water Hydrology Institute reports that all Saskatchewan surface water is polluted with herbicides and one-third of the deep wells. Here in Saskatchewan very little certified organic food is sold in food stores and none is used in government run restaurants, hospitals, schools, senior's

homes, etc. Here in Saskatchewan we have the highest rate of breast and cervical cancer and the second highest rate of prostate cancer in Canada. We use one- third of the pesticides used in Canada and I know pesticides are causing cancer. Why isn't Saskatchewan's chief medical officer warning Saskatchewan citizens about the hazards they face?

I recently sent you an article from the March 2001 edition of Acres U.S.A. The article says that Mad Cow Disease or BSE is caused by pesticides. The federal health Protection Branch has spent months of media time reporting on looking for the source of the Mad Cow Disease. The word pesticides is not included in their bureaucratic language so they would never consider it. However, I was very surprised that I have never heard Agriculture Ministers Lyle Vanclief and Clay Serby ever say "we have a policy to raise as healthy cattle as it is possible to raise in Canada." Incidentally, my cousin Dale in Kamloops, B.C. tells me they are buying hamburger in the Superstores in Kamloops for \$1 a pound. My farmer friends, who are certified organic cattle growers, are getting the same premium prices they got previous to May 20, 2003. Perhaps your Minister of Agriculture should have a look at promoting organic livestock as a way to save the cattle industry in Saskatchewan. I think it would be very useful if agriculture extension livestock people held workshops on how to grow certified organic cattle, the world is hungry (including Japan) and are looking for organic beef. If you give yourself until next spring to revitalize your government to develop policies to clean up the environment and produce healthy food you might get elected next spring. It is worth a try, particularly now that you finally have long-time environmentalist Peter Prebble in the Cabinet to help you.

Elmer Laird, president  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation



November 21, 2005 Davidson Leader

### **Farmers need to take actions to improve status quo**

To all subscribers of The Davidson Leader, their friends and neighbours.

Question: Can we trust the transnational drug and chemical companies to produce nutritious healthy food and save the productivity of the soil for future generations?

A couple of weeks ago, I told you about Sue's concern about the direction our local farm economy is taking or more accurately has gone. I have to agree.

In fact, there is little doubt that we will start hearing about farm bankruptcies soon and there will be others who will sell out now so they can get out while they still have something to leave with. Others have reached the age of retirement several years ago and will be saying, "What the hell is the sense in staying here?"

It is also obvious the transnational drug and chemical companies who today exercise major control over our farming operations are ready to move in. Unfortunately, our politicians all seem completely oblivious to the possible take over of the family farm by agri-business and are just waiting for it to happen. I haven't heard any political party for several elections support the family farm in their election platform.

The fundamental question is: Can we depend on the transnational corporations to farm the land forever and produce nutritious healthy food and save the productive quality of the soil for future generations forever or are we going to put up a fight and keep it?

The question is: Are we going to clean up the environment and keep the farms? About 10 days ago, Environmental Defence Director Rick Smith was interviewed on the CTV program Canada AM. Following is a report on what Mr. Smith said in part:

Canadians are walking around with a cocktail of harmful toxic chemicals in their bodies, says a new report from an environmental watchdog group.

The report, entitled Toxic Nation. A Report on Pollution in Canadians finds that, no matter where Canadians live, how old they are or what they do for a living, they are contaminated with measurable levels of chemicals that can cause cancer, disrupt hormones, affect reproduction, cause respiratory problems or impair neurological development.

The study was commissioned by Environmental Defence.

It examined blood and urine samples taken from 11 people from across the country to examine the range of pollutants found in Canadians' bodies.

Researchers looked for the presence of 88 chemicals, including heavy metals, PCBs, PBDEs (which are used as flame retardants), organochlorine pesticides, and volatile organic compounds (VOCs).

The test found 60 of the 88 chemicals in the 11 volunteers, included 18 heavy metals, five PBDEs, 14 PCBs, one perfluorinated chemical, 10 organochlorine pesticides, five organophosphate insecticide metabolites and seven VOCs.

We are all polluted. We all carry inside of us hundreds of different pollutants and these things are accumulating inside our bodies every day.

If we decide to go certified organic en masse and keep our farms, there is a Federal Government policy that we might use. In the year of 2000, the Federal Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development on Page 184 of their report said:

**Tax incentives for organic agriculture**

The Committee recommends that the government develop an organic agriculture policy for the transition from pesticide-dependent farming to organic farming. This policy should include tax incentives, an interim support program during the transition period, technical support for farmers, the development of post-secondary organic farming programs and enhanced funding for research and development (R&D) in organic agriculture.

I know from personal experience that governments will not do anything for the farm economy unless farmers unite and demand it. I have been involved in farm policy organizations since 1949. So, we have about five months until spring work to develop programs and policies. (If you want a complete copy of the report entitled the Toxic Nation, stop at The Davidson Leader for a copy.)

I think Sue will be happy if farmers take action to improve the status quo and keep their farms. Mothers and grandmothers who are concerned about the health of their children and grandchildren will be too.

Elmer Laird, president  
Back To The Farm  
Research Foundation

May 15, 2006 Davidson Leader

### **Government needs to take action on environment**

Open letter to:

The Hon. Vic Toews, Federal Minister of Justice and Attorney General and the lion.  
Frank Quenelle, Provincial Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Enclosed are further comments on my May 8, 2006 letter regarding an e-mail  
From: Rachel's Democracy & Health News #839, Jan. 26, 2006 <http://www.rachel.org/bulletin/index.cfm?S t=4> where I also asked the following questions:

- 1) When are you (or the government) going to tell Canadians the truth about the fact that there is no system of testing combinations of pesticides for safety and never will be, and
- 2) Would legal action against the Department of Justice be a logical route to go, and
- 3) Should we plan on taking the case to the Supreme Court of Canada. I would appreciate your advice.

Pesticides are obsolete and probably always have been. They were developed in the First World War and the Second World War for biological warfare and never should have been used for agriculture or farming. However, some clever entrepreneur convinced us following the Second World War that we could control nature and that is impossible. Mother Nature is a powerful old girl and personally I try to stay on her side and work with her. Sometimes I don't understand what her plans are but I continue trying to figure them out daily.

I don't think we were hard to convince to use pesticides. Journalist Vance Packard in his book *Hidden Persuaders* concluded that if anyone spent enough on advertising they could sell anything. Pesticide companies certainly poured on the advertising dollars and raised the cost of the chemicals to the farmers to pay for the advertising and have been very successful with their merchandising programs. However, their product has finally failed the test. Weeds over the years built up a resistance to herbicides and farmers had to use stronger and stronger herbicides. Finally they no longer worked.

G.M.O.s were introduced into plants to create a stronger plant so the production plant wouldn't get destroyed when the weeds are sprayed. It is time we started to recognize that if we continue to increase the amount of pesticides used on the soil we will completely destroy the productivity of the soil.

Over the years the chemical lobby has become more powerful and except for Prince Edward Island all governments in Canada promote chemical agriculture only. I admit they give some token service to organic farming but chemical agriculture is still the status quo here. In Saskatchewan we have been graduating students in chemical agriculture only for the last 50 years. Twenty years ago Holland and Denmark were graduating students in both chemical and organic agriculture. In February, 2004 I went on an organic tour of Cuba. There was a German scientist, Dr. Fritz Baltzer, on the tour from a leading Agriculture Research Station in Germany on the tour. He said unequivocally that organic food was more nutritious than chemically produced food. He demonstrated in an hour-and-a-half lecture in Cuba how they arrived at this conclusion.

When it comes to marketing, the European press all report on Dr. Baltzer's findings and our press never tell the Canadian farmers about his findings. There is an old rule in commerce. If you are going to enjoy long term markets for any product you are going to have to produce what the consumer wants. The European consumer wants certified organic grains, oil seeds and legumes. The chemical lobby seems to exercise a lot of control on the press in Canada. They never tell Canadian farmers what the Europeans want.

Here in Saskatchewan we use a third of the pesticides used in Canada. We also have the highest rate of breast and cervical cancer and second highest rate of prostate cancer in Canada. I know pesticides are causing cancer. Dr. Ross Finlater, our chief medical health officer in Saskatchewan, also knows it but he isn't going to tell anyone.

If the Canadian government ever passes any useful "whistle blower" legislation there will be thousands of professional voices speaking out because the professionals will then also enjoy freedom of speech. Farmers enjoy freedom of speech because it would take a very rare occasion that the price a farmer received for his product would be affected by what he says on a public platform.

The Head Chef of The House of Commons reports that he has been serving two items on the menu of certified organic food in all the five restaurants of the House of Commons every day and all organic food for large banquets for several years. However, Premier Calvert and Cabinet refuse to recognize the nutritional value of organic food. They will not serve it in hospitals, nursing homes, school lunch programs, to pregnant women or new mothers, University restaurants, etc. We need federal and provincial policies to produce the healthiest most nutritious food policy. If we don't, our National Medicare program won't survive.

The Canadian Wheat Board, which is elected by prairie farmers, have sales people traveling all over the world looking for markets for the board grains-Spring Wheat, Durum and Barley. I know these sales people can't help but hear about the organic markets everywhere in the world they travel, but to date I have never heard any Wheat Board Official report On certified organic markets. Organic farmers in the area served by the Canadian Wheat Board all have to sell their own grain, however, they have to sell it to the Canadian Wheat Board first and buy it back. The Canadian Wheat Board has a federal mandate to market all Wheat Board grains but refuses to directly market certified organic grains. The buy-back program, as it's called, has been operating since 1976. This is an example of the powerful influence the transnational drug and chemical lobby have on the Canadian government.

Organic producers have been trying to get Federal Government approved, organic certification standards established for at least 20 years. We would much appreciate having our own Canadian standards. However, our Research Foundation and many other Organic producers who hold permit books are certified by standards established by the United States Department of Agriculture.

Nozema Lacustae is a biological control for grasshoppers that was developed in Colorado. We have been trying to get it registered here in Canada for almost 20 years with no success. American organic farmers have it to use all the time. Perhaps this letter will provide some of the answers to why agriculture is in a national crisis. In the year 2000 the Federal Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development of the House of Commons produced a 211 page report. It is entitled

“Pesticides, Making the Right Choices For The Protection of Health and The Environment”. It was an all party committee chaired by long time Environmentalist M.P. Charles Caccia of Toronto. On page 184 it recommends:

**Tax Incentives for Organic Agriculture**

“The Committee recommends that the government develop an organic agriculture policy for the transition from pesticide-dependent farming to organic farming. This policy should include tax incentives, an interim support program during the transition period, technical support for farmers, the development of post-secondary organic farming programs and enhanced funding for research and development (R&D) in organic agriculture.”

If the federal government recognized and introduced the above recommendation it would be the quickest way of getting both the environment and agriculture on the right track.

Elmer Laird, President  
Back To The Farm Research Foundation

August 21, 2006 Davidson Leader

The Back to the Farm Research Foundation made the following presentation to MLA Lon Borgerson, Saskatchewan Secretary for organic agriculture and Terry Pugh, executive secretary of the National Farmers Union following an organic pancake supper at 6:30 p.m. on Aug. 1 at the Parish Hall in Davidson.

*This is the second part of the series that started in last week's paper.*

### **Food Grading System**

The Committee recommends that the government work with industry to quickly put in place a certification organization for the Canadian National Organic Agriculture Standard.

The committee recommends that the food labelling system be improved to provide consumers with better information on the intrinsic nutritional qualities of food products.

### **Organic Agriculture Research**

The Committee recommends that the government grant appropriate financial resources for research, teaching and information distribution in the organic agriculture sector.

The Committee recommends that the government create research chairs in organic agriculture.

The Committee recommends that, within six months of the tabling of the government response to the present report, a special committee composed of members of the Standing Committees on Environment and Sustainable Development, Agriculture and Agri-Food, and Foreign Affairs and International Trade, be formed to conduct an in-depth study on organic agriculture in the domestic and the international context and to make recommendations to the government.

You guessed it—nothing has been done!

### **Other Action Demanded of Federal Government**

Develop mandatory organic certification standards that will meet all international requirements that will permit all certified organic food produced by Saskatchewan organic producers to be marketed anywhere in the world.

License the use of nosema locustae which is a biological grasshopper control.

Establish a testing laboratory for testing organic fertilizers for impurities.

### **Demands on Federal Government**

Canada must rescind the *Plant Breeders Rights Act* for farmers' protection. Canada must ban terminator seeds and genetically modified seeds to protect consumers' nutrition rights.

Canada must ban growth hormones and antibiotics in livestock and poultry production.

Canada must ban the use of carbon monoxide in beef preservation.

Canada must protect farmers' rights to save their own seed.

Canada must ban hog factory pork production.

**Request Support of Both Federal & Provincial**

Government for Soil Conservation

To promote good soil and water conservation practices.

To measure rhizobial action and nitrogen fixation of legumes.

To measure soil bacteria.

To promote the use of biological controls for weeds and pests.

To demonstrate and promote composting of poultry, animal and human waste for fertilizer.

To keep accurate research records and measure soil nutrients and food nutrition in human, animal and poultry feed (grains, oilseeds, legumes and weeds).

To introduce organic fertilizers to organic farming.

To do research and demonstration of intercropping.

To publicize all results from all sources of research done on organic farms.

**Rural Saskatchewan Requires Transportation Changes Now**

The move from small country elevators and railway shipping of grains, oilseeds and legumes to large inland terminals and semi-trailer trucks and B-trains has been a complete disaster for the provincial highways and grid roads. Saskatchewan has more provincial highways and grid roads than any other province. Reports indicate that they are in a disastrous condition. If we have another wet spring like 2006, we might as well harness up some oxen and hitch them to ox carts to move our farm products to market. I don't know who made the decision to change our transportation system to large inland terminals and B- trains, but we must change it back to railways and community loading coops or grain elevators as soon as possible.

**Safe, Unpolluted Water is Fundamental to Good Health, Water Research**

Requirements as Water Quality is a Provincial Responsibility

To check all water for pesticides, pollutants, etc. Dr. Allan Cessna of the National Hydrology Water Institute reports that all surface water and one third of deep wells in Saskatchewan are polluted with herbicides. Programs must be started immediately to find safe, unpolluted water for all Saskatchewan citizens to share.

To check water tables, train well witchers.

Davidson Pivot Irrigation System - Davidson has used all their waste water for irrigation for 30 years. They were the second community in the province to start irrigating from their lagoon. There are 29 lagoon irrigation systems in the province at last count. There could be almost 500 more. I am proud to belong to a community that doesn't dump their waste water into someone else's drinking water.

**Manually Remove Algae from Water Canals**

The pesticide magnacide "H" with its active ingredient acrolien is used by the Saskatchewan government in the canal between Broderick and Blackstrap to eliminate the algae during the irrigation season. The canal flows into Blackstrap Lake and further on to other water supplies. Back in 1960 the Alberta irrigation program had ditch riders who manually removed the algae or other obstructions in their irrigation canals. It is time our government quit polluting our water supplies with pesticides and used manual ways

to clean algae out of water canals. (See back page for copies of Saskatchewan government's ads about the use of the pesticide magnacide "H").

### **Program to Find Safe Drinking Water**

The provincial government should establish a program to find safe sources of drinking water all over the province for Saskatchewan's citizens to share.

### **No Creditability in Pesticide Testing**

On November 3 and 4, 1977, I attended a seminar held at Eco-Valley Centre, Fort Qu'Appelle, Sask. It was sponsored by the Canadian Plains Research Centre, University of Regina. It was called, "Chemicals and Agriculture: Problems and Alternatives." Dr. W.P. McKinley, Head of the Federal Health Inspection Branch, was one of the speakers. In the question period after his speech I asked Dr. McKinley, "Who was doing research on the safety (or hazards) of the combination of pesticides that were being used on people, domestic animals and wildlife". He said, "No one is." In fact he went on to say that very question had been discussed by the World Health Organization prior to that time, and they had decided there was no way it could be done.

Well, gentlemen, we are presenting you with an 18 page copy of an email on the same topic that says the same thing. It is from "Rachel's Democracy & Health News #839, January 26, 2006." The Wall Street Journal published it last summer in a four part series. The article says, "The wheels came off the U.S. chemical regulatory system in a very public way in 2005 - that it is scientifically bankrupt because it is based on assumptions that are simply wrong." It goes on to say there has never been a credible way to test the effects of the combinations of chemicals and never will be. Both federal and provincial governments had representatives at the Fort Qu'Appelle conference and 29 years later we still accept and pay high prices to get food and water tested for pesticide residues, and are prepared to accept the test as reliable information.

### **The Canadian Grain Commission Should Request the RCMP Train Dogs to Check Organic Overseas Grain Shipments for Pesticide Residues**

The chairman of the CGC reports that no one checks containers of organic grain going anywhere for pesticide residues. She says it would cost \$10,000 a test to do a complete testing and no one can afford that test. Many years ago I met with the dog trainer of the RCMP headquarters in Regina. He assured me that dogs could be trained to check food products for chemical residues. He said that at that time it would cost \$2500 to train a dog to do this. I am quite sure, and I have talked to Mr. Nicolias, head of Pesticide Testing Laboratory, Canadian Grain Commission in Winnipeg, that using dogs would be the most effective and inexpensive method of testing all grains for pesticide residues. Let's give it a try!

### **Life In The Soil**

Dr. Roy Cullimore, microbiologist, head of Regina Water Research Laboratory (and frequent visitor to the Titanic), has developed a simple, inexpensive process of finding out if there is bacteria in the soil. He buries an exposed, developed picture slide in the field for three days. When it is put through the slide projector, if there are any bacteria in the soil, it will show colorful trails where the bacteria have chewed on the slide. We



tried it here last year, but we are having trouble- with our projector. All the pesticides and anhydrous ammonia farmers have been using on our soil the last 50 years has no doubt had a devastating effect on soil bacteria and fertility. As we move out of the pesticide era, we are going to need effective soil rebuilding programs.

Provincial Agricultural Policies Should Support the Following:

To demonstrate humane, open range, healthy methods of livestock and poultry production.

To assist people to find sources of healthy, nutritious, certified organic food.

To promote self-sufficient farms, communities, provinces and nations.

To find ways to get farmers back on the land.

To promote co-operation between farm and urban residents in food marketing.

To promote and develop farm training programs for young people.

To meet or exceed the minimum standards of food production of the Canadian Organic Certification Co-operative Ltd., the Canadian Organic Advisory Board and the International Standards Organization.

To promote energy efficiency using methods such as wind power, solar heat, straw bale housing, etc.

To provide an opportunity for food bank production.

To introduce *nosema locustae*, a biological control for grasshoppers.

All cereal grains, oilseeds and legumes must be cleaned to export standards before they leave the community. Screenings should be used for poultry, hog, sheep and goat production.

1. Recognize the nutritional value of wild oats.

For years chemical farmers have treated wild oats as a weed and spent millions of dollars on herbicides to destroy them. The university said years ago that wild oats was the most nutritious oat that is grown in Saskatchewan. Today Manitoba agronomists report that wild oats have a complete immunity to herbicides.

When we were operating the Canadian Organic Producers Marketing Co-operative Ltd. at Girvin (1985- 1992), we sold a lot of oats to an Ontario organic buyer, Dave Reibling. We had good cleaning equipment, but we had trouble cleaning the wild oats out of the tame oats.

One day when Reibling visited our plant I said, "Dave, what are you doing with these oats?" He said, "We are hulling them and shipping them to Chicago and New York markets." I then asked what does a wild oat look like when it is hulled and he said, "Just about the same as the tame oat." I asked, "Why are we cleaning wild oats out of the tame oats?" He replied, "I don't know so why don't you leave them in the tame oats." Well from then on we did and he paid full value for the wild in the tame oats.

Today all grain companies still identify wild oats dockage and farmers grow them and give them to the elevator companies free of charge. In fact farmers also pay the shipping charges on the dockage to Vancouver or Thunder Bay. Our experience with Reibling happened in the late 1980s. It is time we recognized the value of wild oats. In fact to impress you, we will give both Mr. Borgerson and Mr. Pugh a bag of wild oat oatmeal so they can test it for themselves.

**Research Design Hopefully Subsidized by the Government of Saskatchewan**

To research and design a prefab root cellar for rural and urban residents and communities.

To encourage, promote and subsidize solar heated straw bale greenhouses for all communities.

NB #1 The Craik EcoCentre's straw bale solar heated 6000 square foot building would make an excellent community green house.

NB #2 The price of gas is rapidly increasing and the price of fresh vegetables and fruit we import from California and Florida in the wintertime will soar.

NB #3 If we grow the food in our own solar heated straw bale greenhouses, we will be creating jobs in Saskatchewan rather than California.

In 1975 our Research Foundation sponsored a grasshopper harvesting competition. It received national publicity. John Appelt of Ebenezer, Sask., was the winner. However, he was unable to get someone to manufacture it in Canada. He moved to Bozeman, Montana, and worked the next winter with university engineers. They designed a 24 foot wide prototype. However, the chemical lobby was too strong and no one would manufacture it in the United States either. John Appelt presently lives at Lake Cowinchin, B.C., and when I was talking to him a couple months ago, he still has the plan and was willing to move back to Saskatchewan and help any manufacturer who is prepared to work on building a grasshopper harvester. Grasshoppers make good poultry food and are used for human food in Japan and east Africa.

One of our directors, Charles Moore, who grew up in Saskatchewan spent 10 years working in the fruit growing area of the Okanogan. He believes that many of the varieties of fruit they have there could be grown here - particularly in areas where there is a high water table.

To be continued next week...

August 28, 2006 Davidson Leader

### **Cleaning up the land is first step to improving health care**

*The Back to the Farm Research Foundation made the following presentation to MLA Lon Borgerson, Saskatchewan Secretary for organic agriculture and Terry Pugh, executive secretary of the National Farmers Union following an organic pancake supper at 6:30p.m. on Aug. 1 at the Parish Hall in Davidson. This is the third and final part of the series.*

### **Research Design Hopefully Subsidized by the Government of Saskatchewan**

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One of our directors, Charles Moore, who grew up in Saskatchewan spent 10 years working in the fruit growing area of the Okanogan. He believes that many of the varieties of fruit they have there could be grown here - particularly in areas where there is a high water table. We have several farms in this district where the water table is only five feet below the surface of the ground. The Moore's have seeded in the last couple of years 1400 apple and 40 cherry trees on their 50 acre farm northwest of Davidson. Charlie is working with Rick Sawatzky, University of Saskatchewan Horticulture Department on the fruit tree project.

### **Other Objectives**

We need to have "on farm" training programs for young people.

We need programs everywhere to teach young people the challenge of growing food. Davidson has a program called "Roots and Shoots."

The agricultural training programs should be restored in penal institutions like they were 50 years ago.

Support 4-H livestock and garden training programs.

The Canadian Wheat Board, working with our certification organization the Canadian Organic Certification Co-operative Ltd., is sponsoring a project to “direct market” certified organic board grains. We have always supported the principle of direct marketing through the CWB and hope the program is a success. However, we have two questions:

Certified organic producers have used the buy-back process for 30 years. Why has it taken so long to decide the change?

CWB sales people have traveled the world looking for markets since its establishment in 1935. We know they are aware of markets for certified organic board grains. Why haven't they told all CWB members where the organic markets are?

Harper Government Proposes Voluntary Wheat Board - A voluntary Canadian Wheat Board will not work without a floor price. When the Conservative government led by Prime Minister RB. Bennett introduced the CWB in 1935, it also introduced a floor price on wheat. It was 52 cents/bushel at Davidson. Open market prices at that time were as low as 19 cents/bushel. If they are determined to go ahead with a voluntary Wheat Board, they should establish a floor of \$6.50- \$7.00/bushel.

Proposed Adjustment to the Farm Credit Corporation of Canada - The Farm Credit Corporation should have a program similar to the one the Department of Veteran Affairs introduced to help World War II veterans get established farming after the war.

### **Major Changes in Organic Food Production on the Horizon**

The international hamburger corporation, McDonalds, says that it will not permit antibiotics or growth hormones to be used in its hamburgers after 2006. McDonalds buys 1.4 billion pounds of meat a year globally. Coca Cola, Wal-Mart and Philip Morris all say they are going organic in a big way. We hope they are sincere expressions, and they live up to them. There is certainly room for improvement in both the Canadian and international food supply.

### **Canadians from Coast to Coast Have Toxic Chemicals in Their Tissues**

A recent report by Environmental Defence, an Ottawa based environmental watchdog group, told CTV News last winter that “Canadians are walking around with a cocktail of harmful toxic chemicals in their bodies.” The report entitled Toxic Nation: A Report on Pollution in Canadians finds that no matter where Canadians live, how old they are or what they do for a living, they are contaminated with measurable levels of chemicals that cause cancer, disrupt hormones, affect reproduction, cause respiratory problems or impair neurological development. Unfortunately, children born today are exposed to toxic pollution from the time they are conceived and will be for as long as they live. The Toxic Nation report says that in the last 50 years, the global production of manmade chemicals has increased substantially with more than 80,000 new chemicals created. We must reduce toxic pollution of people, domestic animals and wildlife as much as we can.

### **End of World War 2 — Hopefully**

Pesticides were developed for biological controls in the first and second world wars. They were never developed for agriculture. However, Vance Packard in his book

Hidden Persuaders states that if you spend enough on advertising, you can sell anything. That is what happened after the Second World War. We grew enough organic food during the Second World War to win the war and after the challenge was over, we fell for the pesticide propaganda.

Today weeds have developed a high resistance to herbicides so transnational pesticide and drug corporations have had to start using GMOs to strengthen the plant farmers want to produce. With the strengthened plant the herbicides can be made stronger and that will kill the weeds in the field.

Before and during the Second World War farmers were using horse power and some very primitive machinery but still produced a bountiful amount of food even in the dry years of what is known as “the dirty thirties.” If they had had the high technological equipment that we have today, they would have never gone for pesticides.

If we continue to use GMOs to increase the resistance of plants to pesticides, there is little doubt that it won't be long before we destroy the productivity of the soil. If we eliminate pesticides and clean up our environment, the Second World War will be over. Also, we will have increased the health of our citizens and saved our national Medicare program as well as thousands of lives.

Elmer Laird, President  
On Behalf of our Board of Directors

December 18, 2006 Davidson Leader

**Clean environment and healthy food are the best medicine**

The Hon. Stephane Dion, Leader of Official Opposition, The House of Commons

Dear Mr. Dion,

I would like to sincerely congratulate you on your election “win” on Nov. 29. I watched the conference all day on TV from my farm home at Davidson, Saskatchewan. I was amazed at how many green jackets and scarves surrounded you at the end of the convention.

I sincerely hope that when you become Prime Minister you will be able to live up to your reputation as an environmentalist.

Never in the history of mankind have we needed a Prime Minister who is an environmentalist as we do today. Our food, water and air is all polluted and the Medicare system is in a crisis and will collapse soon if we don't clean up the environment so we can have clean, unpolluted water, unpolluted, nutritious food and clean, unpolluted air.

Recommendation #1:

In May 2000 the environmental (all party) committee of the House of Commons published a 212 page report entitled “Pesticides, making The Choice, For The Protection of Health and the Environment.” The committee was chaired by long time Liberal environmentalist, The Hon. Charles Caccia from Toronto.

On page 184 the report recommended, under the heading Tax Incentives For Organic Agriculture that “The Committee recommends that the government develop an organic agriculture policy for the transition from pesticide-dependent farming to organic farming. This policy should include tax incentives, an interim support program during the transition period, technical support for farmers, the development of post-secondary organic farming programs and enhanced funding for research and development (R&D) inorganic agriculture.

(This is the single most important project you can do when you become prime minister).

Following that recommendation it recommended under the heading Food Grading System that “The Committee recommends that the government work with industry to quickly put in place a certification organization for *the Canadian National Organic Agriculture Standard*.

The Committee recommends that the food labelling system be improved to provide consumers with better information on the intrinsic nutritional qualities of food products.

I was very surprised that in the January 23, 2006 Federal Election no one mentioned “environmental clean-up”. Most Ottawa politicians think our National Medicare system can be saved with money. Well, it can't. We need clean, unpolluted water, unpolluted nutritious food and clean air to restore the health of Canadians and protect our National Medicare system.

After all Hippocrates who was considered the father of medicine a couple of thousand years ago said, "Let your food be your medicine and your medicine be your food".

I am enclosing an article from the *Regina LeaderPost* entitled "Nurses Under The Gun" by journalist Pamela Cowan. It says, "Job stress is taking a physical and mental toll on nurses - especially in Saskatchewan. "It goes on to say, "A new Statistics Canada study has linked psychological factors such as work stress to health problems among Canada's nurses."

We don't have enough nurses and let's face it we can't have a successful Medicare program without them.

We have been dwelling too long on attempting to find cures for everything. We must move to prevention.

A clean environment, pure water, nutritious food and clean air are the best preventative measures we can take.

If there is any way we can help you I am sure the Back To The Farm Research Foundation will help in any way it can.

Elmer Laird, President  
Back To The Farm  
Research Foundation

## CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

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February 17, 1997 Davidson Leader

Major grain companies are starting to purchase “certified organic” grain. Markets for “certified organic” cereal grains, legumes and oil seeds are expanding and the prices are improving. Derrick Vetter, Grain Coordinator, United Grain Growers (UGG), Davidson, has received a request from BeBelsers Tracy, Logistics Coordinator, UGG, Calgary, asking him to poll his area for ten to fifteen cars of “certified organic” 2CW oats. The price to the farmer is \$4.00 per bushel. Product must be purchased in carload quantities. Organic farmers must supply a sample of their oats and a copy of their current “certification” to Calgary or their local UGG elevator. The oats will be shipped in “producer cars” starting in March. The producer will be responsible for loading his own car. The UGG search for certified organic oats is going on in the three Prairie Provinces or the area served by the Canadian Wheat Board. The conventional price for 2CW oats at Davidson is about \$1.80 per bushel. (It varies from day to day and elevator company to elevator company.) Agri-trading Corporation of Minnesota, U.S.A., is buying 2CW certified organic oats in the Davidson district for \$4.00 per bushel and picking them up at the bin on the farm. ConAgra, a large American company that is building three large high throughput elevators on the east side of the province, is shipping two hopper cars a month of certified organic wheat to the U.S. The Canadian Wheat Board price for 1CW Red Spring wheat at Davidson is presently \$3.87 per bushel. The organic premium is from \$1.00 to \$2.00 per bushel depending on quality. All wheat going into the organic market is tested for both protein content and “falling number”. The “falling number” is the measure of the gluten content of the wheat, the higher the “falling number” or gluten content, the better the bread will “rise”. Saskatchewan Wheat Pool cleaned out and converted one of their newer wooden elevators at Ernfold, SK, to service the certified organic market in 1994. They clean and ship spring wheat, durum, oats and barley for grain traders or individual farmers who are marketing their own products on a fee-for-service basis. They reload, after cleaning, hopper cars, containers or trucks for the European and North American markets. The Ernfold elevator is a very profitable enterprise, it turned its inventory over ten times last year. Rumour has it that Sask Wheat Pool is now buying certified organic grain directly for markets it has established.

Neil Strayer of Drinkwater, one of the organic grain traders who frequently uses the Ernfold Pool elevator says there is a good demand and prices are good. Strayer says certified organic flax is selling for \$16.50 per bushel at the bin (conventional flax for \$8.25). Certified hulless barley sells for \$6.00 per bushel (Wheat Board price for conventional hulless barley is \$2.05). Certified organic lentils sell for \$0.35 per pound (conventional \$0.14 per pound). Certified organic peas are selling for \$10.00 per bushel (conventional are at \$5.25) and there is a growing demand for certified organic canola and mustard. (N.B. Prices for non-board cereal grains, legumes and oil seeds may change from day to day and from elevator to elevator.)

Dr. Anne A. MacKenzie, Director General, Food Inspection Directorate, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada has developed a program to certify “hormone free”



beef. Two plants in Alberta are interested in marketing hormone free beef to Europe and Japan. The Livestock Committee of the Canadian Organic Producers Certification Co-operative Ltd. are working on a proposal to coordinate the federal agriculture program with their own organic certification program.

Jim and Maggie Mumm of Shellbrook, SK, are direct marketing thirty different kinds of certified organic sprouting seeds. Canada is their largest market followed by the United States and more recently they have developed a market with Taiwan.

Earl Geddes, Canadian Wheat Board, Winnipeg, who is in charge of developing markets for certified organic wheat and barley says the Board is ready to purchase board grains directly from farmers as soon as organic producers are prepared to get together and develop some policy framework for marketing.

March 24, 1997 Davidson Leader

One of our consultants, Regina Environmental Architect Henry Lorenzen, and I made a presentation to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri Food of the House of Commons on behalf of the Back To The Farm Research Foundation on March 18, 1997, at their public hearing in Regina. The committee held public hearings on the new Bill C-72 which contains proposed changes to the Canadian Wheat Board Act. The committee held public hearings in Winnipeg, Regina, Saskatoon, Calgary and Grande Prairie during the week of March 17th to 21st.

We went prepared with samples of certified organic wheat, flour and bread and the measurements of the protein content, falling number (measure of the gluten content) and grade of the samples. Unfortunately, we were unable to circulate our written presentation and wheat and flour samples to committee members because our presentation had not been translated into French. However, it will be translated into French when the committee returns to Ottawa and members will receive their written copies and wheat and flour samples then. Apparently, a result of the Bloc Quebecois influence as "Official opposition", all written submissions to House of Commons Standing Committees have to be presented in both official languages. In our oral presentation we told committee members we are living in a highly technological age where large flour mills have automatic dough mixers, bread makers, bread slicers and bread wrappers that require very precise blending of protein, grain grades and falling numbers to work efficiently. We said the same blending precision was required for certified organic wheat as for conventionally grown wheat and the Canadian Wheat Board was the only marketing agency that had this kind of blending expertise. Our recommendations were:

Recommendation 1) All certified organic grain, including wheat and barley, should be marketed directly (no buy-back) by the Canadian Wheat Board. The CWB has a monopoly to sell all wheat. They should carry out their mandate.

Reason A: The CWB has the ability to supply the blend of grade, protein and falling number flour mills require for certified organic grain just the same as for conventional grain.

Reason B: The present method of shipping certified organic grain to the U.K. or Europe by container maintain its identity is three times as expensive as shipping by "producer car" to Thunder Bay and "bulk" in the "hold" of a lake freighter or ocean going ship overseas destinations.

Reason C: Certified organic farmers are taxpayers and should have the same right to use the marketing facilities of the CWB (including collecting the money) just the same as any other farmer taxpayers.

Note: The CWB sponsored seminars on marketing certified organic wheat in Saskatoon in 1990, 1991 and 1992. British buyers and millers were present, all the marketing and shipping details had been worked out by 1991.

Recommendation 2) That all food products made from grain particularly and other foods when available, served in the House of Commons be "certified organic". The restaurants in the House of Commons should demonstrate to Canadians and visitors from all over the world the best and safest food Canada produces.

Recommendation 3) The Honourable Bill McKnight, Federal Minister of Agriculture, told us in August, 1991, that we would have a national certification program for organic products by January 1, 1992. When are we going to have it? We have been asking for ten years.

When it came to sampling the bread there didn't seem to be any "translation" restrictions. I told Standing Committee Chairman Lyle Vanclief that when I was a small boy the neighbours would ask my father the question, "What is Elmer good for?" He always replied, "To keep bread from moulding." I said that I have worked hard all my life trying to keep bread from moulding. I haven't tasted all the bread in the world but the bread we have here is the best, most nutritious bread I have ever tasted. The bread was baked by Debbie Donnelly, owner and operator of Flour Pot Bakery in Regina. She buys certified organic wheat from Arnold Schmidt, Fox Valley, who farms in a "high protein" area of the province. Ms. Donnelly is one of the few bakers in the province who mills the flour every day before she mixes the bread. She uses certified-organic Stone-ground whole wheat flour, olive oil, purified water, honey, yeast and sea salt in her bread. No Preservatives or additives are used. By milling fresh every day all the nutrients in the wheat are contained in the bread. Foreign buyers are much more aware of the importance of good nutrition than Canadians are. It's unfortunate one doesn't have this high quality bread in the restaurants in the House of Commons. It is not even in the restaurant in the Saskatchewan Legislature in the province where the best wheat in the world is grown. The "bread" presentation went over well. Committee members and staff ate four loaves with butter. However, Wayne Easter, MP, who is a dairy farmer from Prince Edward Island and a former N.F.U. President, in a "tongue in cheek" comment said it was the butter that determined the quality of the bread.

June 26, 2000 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:  
The Chairman of the Public Hearings  
on marketing Certified Organic Products  
by the Canadian Wheat Board

Dear Sir:

#### I. Organic Certification

On Monday June 19, 2000 I was the organic farming speaker at the "Farming For Profit Conference" that was held at Moose Jaw Heritage Inn. The meeting, as you are aware, was sponsored by the universities of Florida, California and Saskatchewan, Agriculture Canada, Saskatchewan Agriculture and the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB). In a discussion with CWB directors Wilfred Harder and Michael Halyk, following my speech about organic certification, I told them I was hosting an organic certification inspector training program at my farm home at Davidson at the time. They asked me if I could inform the CWB at one of the public hearings about organic certification procedures, so I invited Ms. Janine Gibson of Steinbach, Man, to attend the Saskatoon public hearing with me June 28.

Gibson plays a key role in both North American and International organic certification programs. Gibson is:

Second-vice president of the Canadian Organic Advisory Board(COAB); Executive Secretary of the Independent Organic Inspectors Association(IOIA) (International); Chairperson of the Canadian Committee of IOIA; International Training Coordinator for IOIA; Instructor in organic farming and organic certification training at the Assiniboine Community College, Brandon; Inspector member of the Organic Trade Livestock Committee(OTA); Training certification candidates in Michigan, Wisconsin, New Mexico and Mexico; and Intercropping Consultant for the Back to the Farm Research Foundation.

There are 16 organic certification organizations on the prairies, four in Alberta, 10 in Saskatchewan and two in Manitoba.

Gibson has been an organic certification Inspector since 1993. She became interested in the social justice issues involving food after studying psychology at the University of Winnipeg and nutrition at the University of Manitoba. She helped start a bakery in Winnipeg that baked certified organic bread milled from stone ground whole wheat flour. Gibson has worked for eight organic certification organizations in North America. She earns her living as an inspector and has inspected about 850 farms in Canada, U.S. and Mexico. She has a son and a daughter.

I know she will be able to provide the organic certification information the CWB will need. In addition she has a special interest in "intercropping". That is the direction agriculture research must go in the future, in my opinion. The newly identified technique is of special interest to both chemical and organic farmers and is environmentally friendly.

CWB demonstrates a complete lack of understanding of organic inspection process. The recent information I have received from the Board entitled "CWB Organic

Marketing: What are the Options?" dated March 2, May 2 and June 8, 2000 demonstrates a complete lack of understanding and confidence in the organic certification inspection process.

Perhaps it is because all CWB elected board members are chemical farmers and are not prepared to admit that organic certified grain is of a higher quality and is worth more in the marketplace than chemical raised grain of equal grade. It is to be hoped that Ms. Gibson can enlighten the board but it will not be possible at the Saskatoon meeting. The Board is one of the weakest links in the organic marketing chain at this time.

Recommendation I: The CWB Board, before they start marketing certified board grains should hold a two— day workshop to familiarize themselves with the organic certification program. All board members (elected and appointed) should take part in the workshop. Ms. Gibson should design the workshop agenda. Representatives of the 16 certifying organizations should be invited to attend to provide backup information on crops and certification problems in their particular communities.

Recommendation 2: The CWB should recognize chemical agriculture is obsolete and start preparing for the future. Both Canadian and foreign customers are fed up with having their water and food polluted with toxic agricultural chemicals. Weeds and pests are getting more difficult to kill, some are completely resistant to pesticides, farmers are going broke paying their chemical bills, as a result of the farm crisis, many farmers are moving to organic production. The Canadian Organic Certification program needs your support and understanding. If the CWB is going to supply the world with increasing amounts of certified organic food the national organic certification program needs your support and understanding.

Recommendation 3: The CWB has a mandate to market all "board" grains. That includes certified organic. The time is long overdue for CWB members and administrators and bureaucrats to upgrade their understanding of organic marketing.

### **Pesticide Report**

A new report entitled "Pesticides: Making the Right Choice for the Protection of Health and Environment" was recently released by the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development chaired by the Hon. Charles Caccia.

On page 184 the report recommends:

### **Tax incentives for Organic Agriculture**

The committee recommends that the government develop an organic agriculture policy for the transition from pesticide-dependent farming to organic farming.

This policy should include tax incentives, an interim support program during the transition period, technical support for farmers, the development of post-secondary organic farming programs and enhanced funding for research and development in organic agriculture.

### **Food Grading System**

The committee recommends that the government work with industry to quickly put in place a certification organization for the Canadian National Organic Agriculture Standard. The Committee recommends that the food labelling system be improved to

provide consumers with better information on the intrinsic nutritional qualities of food products.

### **Organic Agriculture Research**

The Committee recommends that the government grant appropriate financial resources for research, teaching and information distribution in the organic agriculture sector.

There are many more excellent recommendations that organic farmers, environmentalists and consumers will strongly support.

The CWB directors can no longer ignore or isolate themselves from the recommendations in the Caccia report.

Recommendation 4: The Canadian Wheat Board as part of the two— day conference on the organic certification system invite the Hon. Charles Caccia to present his new report on “Pesticides” to the CWB.

Recommendation 5: The Pesticide Testing lab of the Canada Grain Commission can be used as a backup measure to test certified organic grain for residue.

Recommendation 6: As markets for certified organic grain grows, dogs should be used as a back-up measure where large volumes of grain are being moved or stored.

I think the above recommendations are key factors the CWB directors should address at this time.

Elmer Laird, president  
Back to the Farm Research Foundation

July 17, 2006 Davidson Leader

### **CWB needs to share insight into world organic pricing**

I started what we called non-chemical farming in 1969. There were some private markets developed for organic grain after a short time. However, farmers all realize the Canadian Wheat Board is a compulsory board. All farmers have to market board grains through the Canadian Wheat Board.

However, a farmer from Kindersley persuaded the Canadian Wheat Board to start a by-back program for marketing wheat in 1974. Board grains are Spring Wheat Durum and Barley. The buy-back program means that you sell the grain to the Canadian Wheat Board, buy it back and then find your own market. Some certified organic farmers have been quite successful in developing their own markets.

However, some have lost thousands of dollars because the people they sold to were not bonded by the Canadian Grain Commission and they were not able to collect for their grain. I sold my first certified organic grain in 1978 under the CWB buy-back program.

On July 12, 2006 I received a press release from the Canadian Wheat Board about the new direct market program they are working on. They are working with COCC (Canadian Organic Certification Co-operative Limited). Bill Rosher of Kindersley, secretary of COCC said, "In February 2006, the COCC board of directors formally requested that the CWB begin to market organic grains. In response, the CWB is now working with us to launch this exciting pilot project that will see pooling on organic sales for the first time. We believe in the power of collective marketing and the value of the CWB to farmers. We are elated that the CWB will be applying their resources to helping us bring our product to market."

Bill Gehl, COCC Vice President said, "I want to be able to sell my organic grain cooperatively, have the benefit of pooled organic premiums, have guaranteed delivery, and know that I will be paid for what I deliver. I don't paid for what I deliver. I don't enjoy spending hours on the phone looking for buyers, taking risks on payment, and wondering if I'm getting the best price. I want CWB marketing services."

An official of the Canadian Wheat Board commenting on the Canadian Wheat Board Delivery Contract program said, "The Canadian Organic Certification Cooperative (COCC) and the CWB have joined together to launch a new pilot program specifically designed for organic wheat farmers.

The Organic Delivery Contract (ODC) pilot program was created to meet the needs of organic wheat farmers who have been asking the CWB to get involved in marketing their grain. Farmers who participate in the pilot ODC will benefit from: cooperative marketing, pooled returns, pooled transportation costs, guaranteed delivery, storage payments, secure initial payment and international market development efforts

Through the ODC, organic farmers will be paid the conventional pool price on the grade of wheat they deliver plus an organic premium paid up front and at the end of the year, representing a pooled value for premiums from all organic sales.

The Canadian Wheat Board have sales people looking for markets. Obviously they know certified organic prices all over the world. However, they never report them to the public. This program is long overdue.

For 2006-07, the ODC will run as a pilot program and will only be available to members of COCC. After evaluation of the pilot, the CWB may open and expand the program to all farmers in future years.

The Canadian Organic Certification Co-operative Ltd. has about 140 farmer members in Saskatchewan. There are probably 12 to 14 hundred certified organic farmers in the province.

There are three certification organizations. OCIA (Organic Crop Improvement Association) has eight chapters, Pro-Cert and (COCC) Canadian Organic Certification Co-operative Limited are single organizations compared to OCIA's eight chapters. Saskatchewan has the largest acreage in organic agriculture in Canada. However, I believe Quebec has more organic farmers. The Canadian Wheat Board and the Canadian Organic Certification Cooperative Limited are holding a meeting on July 19, 2006 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Saskatoon Inn, Airport Drive, Saskatoon. Phone Bill Rosher at 306-463-1008 to let him know if you want to attend.



# THINKING ORGANIC

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February 10, 2003 Davidson Leader

## **Crown corporations should purchase quality food for institutions**

Open letter to:  
The Honorary  
Lorne Calvert, Premier  
Province of Saskatchewan  
Legislative Buildings  
Regina, Sask.

Dear Mr. Calvert,

RE: The provincial government should establish a provincial crown corporation to purchase quality Saskatchewan food for Saskatchewan institutions financed by taxpayer's dollars: hospitals, nursing homes, provincial jails, university restaurants, restaurants operated by the provincial government, school lunch programs in poor neighbourhoods, food banks, etc.

On Feb. 16, 2002, your office issued a press release and you held a press conference by using a 'conference call' procedure from Nuremberg, Germany, on your return trip from Russia. (I had the opportunity to take part in the conference call). Your press release was entitled 'Calvert Talks Organics'.

It said in part:

"Premier Lorne Calvert took time from the Team Canada trip to Russia to attend the world's largest trade fair for organic products, BioFach 2002, in Nuremberg, Germany. He met with Saskatchewan producers, their international contacts, other Canadian companies and representatives from the Canadian Consulate in Düsseldorf to support Saskatchewan's organic industry and its global marketing efforts."

The press release quoted you as follows:

"Our organic industry is a success story in rural diversification and I commend the producers who are here for their foresight and commitment. International contacts are critical to their continued success and here they are, front and centre, making contacts that will grow their business and the economy of Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan is well-suited for organic agriculture, with its clean, natural environment, cold winters and abundant farmland. It has the largest number of organic producers in Canada, numbering over 1,000. The province is also the leading Canadian exporter of organic grain and oilseed products and cereal-based food ingredients, with as a major destination."

In conclusion you made the following forecast:

"We see steady sustained growth for Saskatchewan companies involved in the organic food industry for the foreseeable future, with demand exceeding supply in many areas." Regina's Farm-Gro Organics President and CEO Bruce Johnson said. "To have Premier Calvert come to the BioFach trade show in Germany and support Saskatchewan companies lends credibility to the industry, something that will help in future deals abroad."

When I asked you on the conference call what you were going to do to promote organic agriculture when you got home by way of getting organic food into hospitals and school lunch programs, etc., you said, “I am not going to do anything”.

Well, Mr. Calvert, you are obviously a man of your word. You also did nothing when the “FarmGro” organic milling and marketing plant at Regina went into receivership. You did nothing even when the Saskatchewan government had over six million dollars invested in the 12 million dollar certified organic plant that was designed to mill 16,000 tonnes of spring wheat and durum wheat and clean 18,000 tonnes for the export market.

In fact, Bob Balfour, chairman of the FarmGro board of directors tells me that you or your government didn’t even buy one pound of certified organic flour for the many institutions that are financed by the provincial government to help FarmGro survive.

In fact, you have been on a three million dollar ‘promote Saskatchewan program’ to keep people in Saskatchewan or bring them back. I think it would have been far more useful if you had spent that three million dollars on high quality certified organic food for the above listed institutions than spending it on advertising. If you had established a crown corporation to purchase high quality certified organic food for our institutions the citizens of this province who stayed here or come back would have had a reason to be proud of their province and its food. In addition, it would have advertised the organic products to visitors or tourists and helped increase organic food sales and Farm Gro may not have had to face bankruptcy.

I was on the board of directors of The Canadian Organic Producers Marketing Co-operative at Girvin, Sask., when it went bankrupt in 1992. It was incorporated in 1983. It lasted for nine years, in those nine years it had the same kind of support from the Devine and Romanow governments that you provided for FarmGro. They did nothing to help. On one occasion I took a couple of 25 kg bags of certified organic stone-ground flour to Providence Hospital in Moose Jaw as a donation and part of a sales promotion. The lady who was I head of purchasing food told me that if I wanted to sell them any food products, I would have to go through Sunspun (the parent company of Superstore) in Toronto. I doubt that anything has changed in our system of purchasing food for our institutions since 1992..

I recently received a copy of the “Hunger Count 2002; Eating Their Words: Government Failure on Food Security” published for The Canadian Association of Food Banks. Here in Saskatchewan we have 43 per cent of the cultivated land in Canada and about one million people and the demand on food banks is increasing annually. In fact, food banks are a growth industry.

Well, Mr. Calvert, you think it is wonderful that we grow high quality certified organic food for the rest of the world, but you said at Nuremberg, Germany, that you were not going to do anything to provide needy Saskatchewan citizens with high quality nutritious food. I seriously hope you change our mind and establish a crown corporation to help get that high quality certified organic food to Saskatchewan citizens.

Elmer Laird, President  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

October 11, 1999 Davidson Leader

Open letter to:  
Dr. Jim Melenchuk, Minister of Education:

Re: Establishing a faculty of environmental studies at a Saskatchewan university and developing useful environmental studies in kindergarten to Grade 12 curriculum.

Now that you are a minister of the provincial government with considerable political clout you have a wonderful opportunity to upgrade the education system to meet the educational needs of a high tech society. Presently our education systems does very little to prepare people for the healthy survival of this and future generations. Evelyn Potter of Biggar, first female president of the National Farmers Union elected at the founding convention in Winnipeg in August 1969, frequently told her audience "We did not inherit our land from our forefathers we have borrowed it from our children and therefore we should pass it on in better condition than we received it." Unfortunately our present government isn't doing anything to support Mrs. Potter's philosophy. You have an opportunity to make positive changes. The government in which you are serving as education minister has no respect for the environment or meaningful environmental policies that will conserve our resources for future generations.

Unfortunately none of the three main political parties in the most recent election had meaningful environmental policies or demonstrated they understood the present agricultural crisis in any way. The agricultural crisis is far more than a money issue. Here in Saskatchewan both our environment and our economy are dominated by large transnational drug and chemical companies.

They sell us large volumes of agriculture chemicals that make us ill and large volumes of drugs to attempt to make us healthy. Our agricultural spraying season lasts seven months a year. We use in excess of I million, 20 litre containers of pesticide annually. Our surface water supplies and food are polluted with pesticides all the time and our air is polluted seven months a year. As a result our health-care program is in financial crisis. You launched the Liberal agriculture program at Fred Kadlec's farm at Davidson. I don't know if you will remember our conversation but I told you then that if we didn't start cleaning up the environment not even the Melenchuk health-care policies would keep the provincial health-care program from collapsing.

Education is the key to environmental cleanup. Presently our federal and provincial governments support only chemical agriculture research and extension programs. Our college of agriculture graduates people in chemical agriculture only. More progressive countries like Holland and Denmark have been graduating students in organic agriculture for over a decade. Biotechnology or genetic engineering of seeds is also a part of the agricultural and environmental crisis. Both federal and provincial governments are pouring money into biotechnology research that is developing crops that no one will buy. However, the pollen from the genetically engineered crops is drifting over and polluting other crops.

The transnationals are promoting genetic engineering to control the farms, it has nothing to do with agriculture science. As a medical doctor you are no doubt aware that

deaths or illnesses caused by agriculture pesticides are not “notifiable” under the Saskatchewan Occupational Health and Safety Act. There are no public records kept like with broken limbs. This is evidence of how powerful the chemical lobby is.

If Mrs. Potter had been asked, I am sure she would have applied the same philosophy to the food from fresh water and the sea. A few years ago as a result of lack of environmental national and international control we lost the northern cod because of “over fishing”. Later the supply of West Coast salmon has been lost because of lack of national and international agreements on conservation practices or harvesting controls.

Now we have the lobster crisis at Burnt Church, N.B. between status Natives, non-status Natives and non-natives.

The basic reason for the conflict is because conservation laws and regulations have been drafted by politicians who have no knowledge or concern for the environment. It is obvious that even the Supreme Court judges who interpreted the laws had no concern for the environment. If we are going to conserve our food resources of land and sea for future generations we must have an informed public on environmental issues, particularly politicians, lawyers, judges and the press. We have lived in a world of compartmentalized thinking far too long.

I would like to suggest that for your own edification you attend one or both of the organic farming conference that will be held in Saskatoon Nov. 14 to 16 and in Regina Nov.29 to Dec. 1. This will give you a perspective on healthy agriculture production that conserves the soil and then you will be ready to start developing a practical environmental education system.

Everyone worries about protecting the endangered species of this planet but no one recognizes that Man is at the top of the list.

Elmer Laird, president,  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

September 1, 2003 Davidson Leader

**Letter states concerns among issues with youth in Saskatchewan**

Open letter to:  
Mr. Robin Mowat, president  
University of Saskatchewan Students Union

Dear Mr. Mowat:

The CBC Radio news broadcast on Tuesday morning, Aug. 26, stated that students at the University of Saskatchewan, University of Regina and SIAST were preparing to take political action to improve their status in life.

The message on the action they proposed to take or your objectives was not very clear or perhaps it was too early in the morning for me to digest the complete news item.

I have phoned your office for a copy of your press release, but the young lady who answered the phone didn't think there was one.

I am pleased to hear that young people in Saskatchewan are going to become politically active.

In the past few elections most of the political rhetoric has been recycled with no clear direction of what our society's objectives or Saskatchewan's goals should be.

The Premier wants to keep young people in Saskatchewan, but to date he has not announced any programs that would have goals or objectives that would challenge young people to stay here.

Others would like to develop a tourist business, others would like to make money farming and a few environmentalists would like to clean up the environment.

I think it is time someone set some common objectives that will challenge young people to stay in Saskatchewan to accomplish goals they could conscientiously support and would be a benefit to all residents, young, old, poor, or rich and that everyone could contribute their energy to.

We should also have objectives that would give everyone a feeling of satisfaction when achieved. Here in Saskatchewan I would like to see people work for a clean environment. I believe we need to

1. Recognize pure air, water and certified organic food as the foundation for our health-care program. Dr. Allan Cessna, National Hydrology Water Institute reports that all surface water and one third of the deep wells are polluted with herbicides. All our major cities rely on surface water for potable water supply. Our Department of Health has not made us aware of the hazards that drinking polluted water has on our health.

In fact, the provincial laboratory, operated by the Saskatchewan government, that tests most of -the water for farmers (if it is tested for pesticides) is not an accredited laboratory.

Fifteen years ago, I had a rare opportunity. Prairie Certified organic farmers organized the Canadian Organic Marketing Co-operative Ltd. and established an organic plant at Girvin.

I had the opportunity to sell certified organic stone whole wheat flour.

I attempted to sell the flour to the restaurant at the College of Agriculture, the four provincial government restaurants and particularly the one operated at the Saskatchewan Legislative building and also the restaurant in the House of Commons, Ottawa.

I was unsuccessful in Saskatchewan. However, the head chef of the House of Commons told me about a year ago that he had two organic items on the menu of the five restaurants in the House of Commons.

Just think what a difference it would have made to the education of agriculture, medical students if they had an opportunity to eat certified organic food.

It is fundamental to both medicine and agriculture that they know what quality food is. Incidentally, I was on an organic tour of Cuba last winter.

There was a noted German scientist and researcher, Dr. Fritz Baltzer on the tour. He said that his research laboratory had proven unequivocally that organic food was more nutritious than food from chemical agriculture.

However, 15 years ago, universities in Holland and Denmark were graduating students in both organic and chemical agriculture.

They were far more progressive in their thinking then and still are.

## 2. University of Saskatchewan - Biotechnology Capital of the World

In the last few years, MP Ralph Goodale and federal Agriculture Minister Lyle Vanclief, with the help of both governments, have been pouring money to make the U of S the bio-technology capital of the world.

It is hard to believe when you see all the new high- priced construction at the - Universities of Saskatchewan and Regina that they serve a drought-stricken province with an agriculture that is under severe economic stress. In this age of globalization, the transnational drug and chemical corporations are taking control of both the universities and family farmers.

In the Saturday, Aug. 9, 2003 edition of the Star Phoenix, journalist Jason Warick, in an article entitled Lining up Against GM Wheat, reports that the transnational corporation Monsanto is in partnership with the federal Department of Agriculture on their GMO wheat development program and stand to make millions in royalties if approved and developed.

They are hoping to make millions by exploiting the family farm.

Earlier in the story, Warick also reports that 90 per cent of farmers are opposed to GMO wheat. Monsanto's GMO canola was a disaster and has polluted all organic farmers' crops with GMO canola that the markets of the world will not buy.

In fact the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate (umbrella organization for all organic farmers in the province) is taking Monsanto to court on Feb. 2, 2004 in a class-action suit charging them with damages to the organic canola market and also to get an injunction to stop the introduction of GMO wheat.

Well, Mr. Mowat, I have written about events I have been involved in while working on environmental cleanup. I know that today many people want certified organic food, clean air and pure water. More of the mothers and grandmothers today are concerned about the environment their children will grow up in.

I would like to suggest that YOU consider "environmental clean-up" as a worthy objective as the foundation for your political action.

One thing I am very sure of is this, your objectives must be in the common interest of all the people of the province.

The university was established to meet the needs and the objectives of Saskatchewan citizens and must continue to do so if it is hoped that it will serve a useful and meaningful purpose.

Elmer Laird, president  
Back To The Farm  
Research Foundation

November 18, 1996 Davidson Leader

Open Letter To:  
The Honourable David Dingwall  
Federal Minister of Health  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON

Dear Mr. Dingwall,

Re: The Banning of advertising of all toxic substances that are deliberately discharged into the atmosphere such as tobacco (smoke), pesticides, herbicides and fungicides (sprayed.)

I am writing to urge you to expand the “anti-tobacco advertising” legislation to include the advertising of pesticides, herbicides and fungicides. Society over the years has organized many “smoke free” areas so most people are able to avoid exposure to “second-hand” smoke. However, everyone is directly or indirectly exposed to the toxic pollutants from thousands of tonnes of pesticides, herbicides and fungicides used every year that are sprayed on lawns, gardens, roadsides, forests and farms. If people do not get caught in the direct drift they are exposed to chemical residues in air, water and food.

Federal government tests by the Departments of Health, Agriculture and Environment for pesticide safety have never been completely comprehensive. Dr. Shahamat U. Khan, Centre for Land and Biological Resources Research, Agriculture Canada, says the solvent method of extracting chemical residues has never extracted all the chemicals. He said a new system of testing demonstrated that from 10 to 93% of the total pesticide residues were not found using the solvent method. Dr. Khan is being sponsored by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to travel to many nations of the world to update governments on procedures for detecting chemical residues. He says that all countries he has visited are taking action to update their testing procedures, even the United States, but to date Canada has not taken any action.

A new book was published in 1996 entitled “Our Stolen Future”. The authors are two environmental scientists and a journalist. Theo Colborn and John Peterson Myers are the scientists and Dianne Dumanoski is the journalist. The foreword was written by U.S. Vice- President Al Gore. The authors say that maximum permissible limits of chemical residue are meaningless. Health hazards from chemical residues have always been determined by their effects on adults. They go on to say that very minimal amounts of chemical residues can be very dangerous to a fetus in the womb and even to the young child after birth. They describe how chemicals that are picked up at the bottom end of the food chain may be multiplied many times before they reach humans at the top end of the chain. Testing for chemical residues for many years after agricultural chemicals were introduced was for toxicity only. Later on, tests finally branched out to recognize cancer, birth defects and genetic disorders. The authors report that recent studies show that sperm counts have dropped fifty percent since agricultural chemicals were introduced and birth defects are much more numerous in both humans and wildlife. Perhaps the biggest concern is the fact that chemical residues in the environment are continually attacking the



human immune system to the extent that there are numerous diseases today the human body is unable to defend itself against and antibiotics are no longer effective in many cases.

A friend said to me the other day when we were discussing environmental pollution and health related issues, "It is very sad, the same trans-national drug and chemical companies are selling pesticides that pollute the environment and the drugs to people who become ill as a result of the pollution and are making huge profits doing both."

He went on to say, "It is also very sad that all the governments of Canada are more interested in protecting the financial interests of the drug and chemical companies than they are in the health of Canadian citizens. Perhaps we will have to wait for the medical health program to go bankrupt before we get a government that puts the health of its citizens first."

Well, Mr. Dingwall, the first step toward cleaning up the environment is to prohibit the tobacco, drug and chemical companies from advertising. The next step is to launch an environmental campaign working with your colleagues, the Ministers of Environment and Agriculture. The third most important thing is to take action before the Prime Minister calls the next election.

Sincerely,  
Elmer Laird, President  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation

October 1, 2001 Davidson Leader

**Letter to Jill Spellisy, head of University of Regina's school of journalism:**

Thank you for the invitation to attend the journalism conference at the Riddell Centre entitled Journalism and Democracy: Discourse in a World of Media Conversion on Sept. 21, 22 and 23. I admit the invitation was a surprise. In our second conversation I told you that I didn't think that you would want me there because if I were a dictator for a year or more I would insist that all journalism students spend half their time in environmental studies. You said that you would do the same thing. This statement shows my frustration in trying to get both federal and provincial governments to abandon their policies that promote chemical agriculture only. I don't know what your reasons were, I have been an organic farmer for 32 years and as a group we have made very few political or policy gains. Our message never gets to the politicians, or perhaps if it does they never act on it. I think the reason is because the press never questions them on the topic. Democracy does not work unless both the press and the politicians fulfill their normal functions. In case of certified organic farmers seeking new policies to help their industry (and clean up the environment) the press never ask the politicians (to my knowledge):

- Why federal and provincial governments don't abandon their policies that promote chemical agriculture?
- Why don't you serve certified organic food at the school of journalism?
- Why don't they serve certified organic food at the college of agriculture, in the House of Commons, in the Saskatchewan Legislature?
- Why don't they make certified organic food available to pregnant women in Canada (Dr. Allan Cessna, National Hydrology Water Institute), reports that fetuses are very sensitive to pesticide pollution in the first three months.
- Why don't you make certified organic food available to citizens who have chemical allergies, school lunch programs and many others?

The real question is: Why don't the press ask the politicians if they like eating food or drinking water with pesticide residues in it. I asked one of the most prominent national press people present between sessions. Why do you trust the national health protection branch standards to provide you with safe food. He said, "In my travels I eat out most of the time and I have to trust them." This surprised me because most national press people are very cynical about everything, I am amazed. Perhaps I found the answer I was looking for. Both press and politicians eat out most of the time and have to trust the food. While at the conference I noticed several things that come under the banner of "body language". For example, I didn't see anything—display or otherwise that would highlight the environment or certified organic food. In fact there was a display in a glass case in the main foyer that had some artificial devilled egg. It looked rather hideous. Everyone was drinking bottled water but there were no labels to indicate it was pesticide free. There wasn't anything on the program that would make anyone aware that there is about 102 local weekly newspapers in the province. That may have taken the focus off the rural community and food production. It is true that all political parties have abandoned their support for the family farm and are waiting for the transnational

corporations to take over the family farm. The national press never ask them why? I never saw anything to indicate there is a health food industry and also a health food press. It would appear the professional life of the national press is completely separated from their private lives and the lives of their families.

Perhaps it is the foundation colleges of journalism, medicine and agriculture were built on. They were started when mothers and grandmothers of this nation decided what food was safe for their families to eat from pregnancy to the grave long before there was a health protection branch.

I grew up in what we considered poverty in the dust bowl of the 1930s, 16 miles south of Swift Current (Wymark was our address). Compared to today it was a very safe world as far as food was concerned. There were no pesticides, antibiotics or growth hormones to pollute the food. We didn't have any electrical power on the farm that meant no fridges or deep freezers, no natural gas or telephone, no trucks, automobiles or tractors on our farm. However, we had fresh milk (not pasteurized) every day, there was no place to keep it from going sour. We had fresh butter. All summer we had fresh eggs three times a day and chicken on Sunday if company came. We had fresh vegetables all going sour. We had fresh butter. All summer we had fresh eggs three times a day and chicken on Sunday if company came. We had fresh vegetables all summer. Mother canned beet and bean pickles with a minimum amount of vinegar. Fruit was preserved with sugar. Vinegar and sugar were the only preservatives we had. We had meat in the winter when it could be kept frozen buried in the wheat or we had home-canned chicken or beef other times. We didn't have any money to buy chocolate bars, pop or junk food. We had a very safe food supply and we thought we were living in poverty. Today we have relative prosperity and a polluted food supply. This was the lifestyle or foundation the colleges of journalism, agriculture and medicine were built on and it apparently is time they all went back and explored their foundations. Some would call it examining their navel. Pollution today is causing us a magnitude of health problems that no Medicare program can resolve. If we are going to survive in this high- tech world we have to start looking over our shoulders at how our ancestors survived and perhaps we can develop an environmentally healthy lifestyle and enjoy an abundant supply of nutritious certified organic food and unpolluted water. Journalism students need an opportunity to relate their work to the needs of their personal well being. All students have a basic right to this information.

Elmer Laird, president,  
Back to the Farm  
Research Foundation