

A Better Rural Voice for Immigration

by Tony Schultz and Kat Becker

As immigration reform moves forward nationally, the voices from rural communities appear to be dominated by conservative farm organizations rather than based on a community's needs and values. It is also based around premises that will continue to perpetuate the farm crisis — benefiting a few over the many in rural areas.

The current monologue tied to rural areas is one created to serve large agricultural employers and agribusiness. As a headline in the *Vegetable Growers News* puts forth the policy "farmers want" is simply "more workers."

The Farm Bureau is part of a coalition of agribusiness groups that is saying "laws should be amended so that farms could legally employ foreign workers year-round in addition to seasonal jobs." Both voices frame immigrants as a needed input into the agricultural system — not as people who care for their families or those who go to our churches.

This rural viewpoint is also not based on policies for small and midsized farmers, small rural businesses or community vitality. It seems odd to us that in a sluggish economy with a 7.9 percent formal unemployment rate that there should be a perilous lack of workers. Don't conservative economists tell us that markets will respond and wages will rise to attract workers to this sector?

In reference to a supposed farm labor shortage, factory farmers and racist conservative politicians say "no white people will do these jobs."

We absolutely disagree with that absurd stereotype that there is something about agricultural work that makes it not good enough for the rest of us.

First, on our farm we do monotonous physically difficult work regularly. We shovel manure, toss hay bales and spend 40 percent of summer days on our hands and knees pulling weeds and harvesting vegetables, and we love doing it. But it is not just the labor that matters here but rather our own relationship to our work. We love it because we get to make decisions about what we do and when we do it. We get to determine a price that provides for our family and allows us to make investments into our farm. We get to spend time with our young children. It is empowering work that we have a lot of control over. Small farms like our own have no labor shortage and are approached by many people wanting to work for us as a step toward their own farm ownership, as a training place where they can be treated as valuable partners in work.

Our county's own grazing apprenticeship program, designed to help beginning farmers get trained and onto their own farms, has been so

popular that they have a waiting list of more than 50 individuals waiting to be placed on small and midsized farms and paid \$10 an hour for two years.

It seems like lots of people want to do farm work but they also want to someday own their own farm — within the immigration policies set forth by agribusiness, farm workers should be low-wage farm workers forever.

What the conservative agribusiness lobby means when they say no one wants these jobs is really "no native worker wants jobs where they are paid poorly for hours of repetitive work with no chance for promotion or a path to entrepreneurship."

They want a pool of desperate workers, with no legal access to state support, who don't speak the language and can be isolated by the larger culture. Imagine the host of larger conversations we would need to have about the direction of our agricultural system if the basic assumption that large farms are efficient was looked at in a real light — large farms in most fruit and vegetable crops and livestock production are economically dependent on exploiting people — that means not economically profitable.

If living wages were paid and there were no racial hierarchy in this industry, factory farms wouldn't exist.

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So what is our take on immigration reform?

In rural communities we are very vocal about our values. And a reasonable immigration policy seems like one based around these. We value hard work, independence, small businesses, family, community support, and the overarching idea that we should love thy neighbor as ourselves.

We need policy that is based on real possibility — not exploitation — and allows immigrants old and new to build their own businesses as we have been able to do historically.

We also need to understand the ways in which racism has been used to keep all of us down, to pit rural people ravaged by international trade policies and agribusiness farm policies against people of color and immigrants

who have been ravaged by the same policies.

Working and middle-class family farmers, entrepreneurs and all citizens must not be fooled into blaming people with even less social, political and economic power than themselves; people who have almost nothing and are doing whatever work they can to make a better life for their family. We must ask who is responsible for creating these conditions. Who receives the power and capital and benefit from this?

That is where the problem lies.

We need to be clear about what actually benefits us. Broad democratic ownership rather than concentration has been shown in many economic studies to best serve rural communities, so

why do we keep shooting ourselves in the foot and siding with the few at the expense of many?

We are for immigration reform featuring amnesty and a clear path to citizenship for people who are giving their lives to make this country work because it is the fair, decent and just thing to do, not so some factory farmer can keep the sweatshop going.

We need a better immigration policy because of the opportunity it provides for America's economy and culture, not to fill the needs of a caste system of factory farms.

A real path to American citizenship is one that includes a living wage for work and the opportunity to own a business. If America is going to be great, America must be shared.

DON'T BELIEVE THE LIES Monsanto Won't Feed the World

BY JIM GOODMAN - ORGANIC DAIRY FARMER WONEWOC, WI

A lie told often enough becomes the truth and the food industry, specifically, the Genetically Modified (GM) food industry has been telling a series of whoppers for decades.

These "big lies" do not benefit society, on the contrary they diminish the common good. They drive people into poverty, injure, kill and foster genocide. Lies are seldom victimless. We have been told GM can feed the world, but it is a lie. As Steve Smith head of Novartis noted in 2000, GM will not feed the

world, — that takes political and financial will. There is political will all right, but it is a political will to promote corporate profit above all else. Corporations, we are told, are people, very special people, people whose profit counts for more than "real" people, or the planet.

Perhaps more importantly, feeding the world will take farmers who rely on their own skills and knowledge of their land. Farmers who know what crops are best suited to their environs, and their culture. The world will

be fed by crop diversity and personal connections to the land, not a GM mono-culture.

For over 30 years the world has been lied to consistently and very effectively by the "university-industrial complex". Many university researchers were and still are, true believers in the "promise" of GM technology. The promise to feed the world and protect the environment. Many work with the best of intentions, at least in their way of thinking, or in their way of rationalizing. *(Continued on pg.9)*

University administrations believe in GM technology, if for no other reason than it is a mechanism for pulling millions of dollars in research money into their institutions— and in the real world, research will be done on what pays, not necessarily what is just, right, or actually works. Researchers like Jonas Salk, who had little interest in personal profit, are few and far between. Prior to WWII farming, worldwide, was nearly equivalent to what we now know as Organic Farming. There were few synthetic crop or livestock chemicals, antibiotics were used judiciously, farmers relied on seed saving and a knowledge base that was developed over generations.

Agricultural chemicals were, in essence, the result of converting war time chemical production into agricultural chemical production. The real demand was for a means to continue a profitable industry. Fertilizers and pesticides replaced explosives and war time chemicals and agriculture became the new market. True, food production (both in acreage and yield) did increase, but that increased yield depended on increasing applications of chemical fertilizer and pesticides. More seeds, more fertilizer, more pesticides. Monsanto and their bio-tech counterparts are now reshaping food production into an industrial process, one that few governments can or will challenge.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) the “People’s Department” seems inclined to

push the corporate agenda of Agribusiness, not the people’s agenda. While the public asks for food that is just, green, fair and healthy, their needs are secondary to increasing corporate profit. Labeling GM food? Forget it.

The Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) responsibility to protect the public health and regulate the safety of food has been severely compromised by a succession of “revolving door” administrative appointments of former industry executives. Once regulations favorable to the GM and agricultural chemical industry are in place, they revolve back to their highly profitable industry positions.

The mission of the U.S.

Department of State is “To create a more secure, democratic, and prosperous world for the benefit of the American people and the international community.”

How does their aggressive strategy to promote agricultural biotechnology fit into that mission? How does promoting corporate profit over culturally appropriate and sustainable agriculture make the international community more prosperous or promote Food Sovereignty?

“It would take an act of Congress” to change the situation, but clearly, that is unlikely as corporate lobbyists and corporate campaign donations have swayed most of Congress to be more inclined to support corporate wishes rather than the good of the people.

By including the “farmer assur-

ance provision,” or “The Monsanto Protection Act” in the Appropriations Committee continuing resolution, Congress has, used “an act of Congress”, to prevent the federal courts from halting the planting of GM crops if they are reassessing the USDA’s approval protocol, environmental or safety concerns.

So, there you have it, all three branches of the government are, in effect, in the pocket of the bio-tech industry. While Monsanto has a history of riding roughshod over public opinion and the ability to get their way in Washington, they have also become the symbol of corporate domination. In their case it is domination, perhaps even ownership of the food system in America.

Corn, soybeans, cotton, canola, their patented genes are found in nearly all processed food. While Monsanto routinely sues farmers for patent infringement, farmers who do not plant GM crops bear all responsibility for protecting their crops from GM contamination.

The International March Against Monsanto held on May 25th says Food should be controlled by farmers and consumers, not corporations. Governments seem unwilling to act, so grassroots action is all we have. March against Monsanto held May 25th rejected corporate ownership of the food system every day. **Don't believe the lies. Monsanto won't feed the world.**

Victory for Food Rights and Wisconsin Farmer Vernon Hershberger

by Rebekah Wilce — May 27, 2013 - PR Watch

In what has been roundly declared a victory for food rights and private food transactions by supporters, a jury returned a verdict of not guilty on three of four charges against Wisconsin raw milk farmer Vernon Hershberger in the early morning hours of March 25. "It's a beautiful day. . . They tried their best to set me free," Hershberger told The Complete Patient after a few hours of sleep.

The twelve members of the jury declared Hershberger not guilty of three counts of operating a retail establishment without a license, operating a dairy farm as a milk producer without a license, and operating a dairy processing facility without a license. They declared him guilty of violating a state holding order – something Hershberger maintained both before and during the trial that he had done. The judge had previously ruled that the validity of the holding order could not be called into question during the trial. Nevertheless, the three acquittals indicate that the state Department of Trade, Agriculture, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) never should have issued the order, said a member of Hershberger's legal team.

Hershberger's lead defense attorney, Glen Reynolds, said in his closing statement that he found this case to be "one of the most abusive, most incomprehensible uses of government power that I've ever seen, when an agency of our government took such an aggressive, mean-spirited approach against such a good man, against a member of this community." He called it a "pathetic waste" of government resources.



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Supporters Say Trial Sets Precedent for Food Rights

The Weston A. Price Foundation, which advocates for the legalization of raw milk in Wisconsin and the ten other states where its purchase is not legal in some manner, told the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* that the trial's outcome will set a precedent.

Defense attorney Ajna Sharma-Wilson told the Center for Media and Democracy (CMD) that the verdict "sends a message to the state and to DATCP in Wisconsin as well as other regulatory departments nationally that the people are realizing direct access to farm-fresh food is a fundamental right, and the freedom to contract with those farmers and build the relationship is part of building the community."

Importance of Community. Defense attorney Glen Reynolds noted in his closing statement that Hershberger had

come up with "a novel plan for connecting farmers with people like you and me, who would prefer perhaps not to drink industrial milk, who would prefer to be closer to the farmer, those of us who can't afford to buy a farm, who can't afford to buy a cow, but would like to have a relationship with that farm." In other words, Hershberger built a community.

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Sharma-Wilson added afterwards that "part of the reason why this case won is because the community was so strong and everybody from all over the nation was able to come together in solidarity for Vernon. The more we work together, the more the community builds and we share this knowledge with people, the less chance there will be to stop us. . . [W]e have to keep doing what we do, standing strong, and taking each step as it comes."

Members of the farm's buying club indicated to CMD that they, along with other food freedom supporters, were not only paying Hershberger's legal fees, but the cost of rebuilding a barn that burned down earlier this year and replacing the equipment it contained. This example of strong support from a farm's community demonstrates the vital ties built between what have been called food co-producers: farmers, farmworkers, and eaters, in the many ways that those roles can overlap and be combined.



Wisconsin Raw Milk Bill Re-Drafted, Looking for Co-Sponsors.

In 2010, a bill legalizing the purchase of raw milk directly from Grade A licensed dairy farms passed the Wisconsin state legislature by a wide margin. Then-Governor Jim Doyle had indicated that he would sign the bill when it reached his desk, but he made an about-face and suddenly vetoed the bill in May 2010. Legislators, raw milk supporters, and local media suspected the influence of the powerful Wisconsin dairy industry.

It turned out they were right – industry groups had sent a letter days before the veto. Signers included the industry lobby groups the Dairy Business Association (DBA), Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association (WCMA), Wisconsin Dairy Products Association, and Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation, as well as public health lobbies like the Wisconsin Association of Local Health

Departments and Boards, Wisconsin Medical Society, and Wisconsin Public Health Association. The lobbyist for the DBA and WCMA, Shawn Pfaff, had been Governor Doyle's deputy political director during his 2006 re-election campaign and a member of his staff for three years.

But a raw milk bill is on the table again, sponsored by Assistant Majority Leader Glenn Grothman (R-20). Governor Scott Walker has indicated he'll sign it if it contains safeguards for public health. The Wisconsin Raw Milk Association (WRMA) is working to get the bill introduced, and urging supporters to call their legislators and ask them to co-sponsor the bill.

Brian Wickert, President of WRMA, told CMD, "This trial represents a tremendous success. Now we need to change the law so this doesn't happen again."

The Mystery of Dying Bees: Madison Beekeepers, UW researchers Look for Answers

By: MOLLY STENTZ

Published in the *Isthmus* (Madison, WI), 6/13/2013

Enjoy a nice crisp apple recently? Chances are you can thank a honeybee for that. Like to snack on almonds or perhaps sip a glass of orange juice in the morning? Those foods were also made possible by bees.

Bees pollinate much of the food we eat, but they're dying in huge numbers. This year was worse than most, a new low in a trend that's only getting worse. What will this mean for us and our food supply? Every year, the United States Department of Agriculture counts the number of beehives tended by beekeepers across the country. The new numbers are in, and they're not pretty. Nearly a third of all honeybees died nationwide.

For beekeepers like Mary Celley in Dane County, that number would have been not good news. Celley estimates she lost 85% of her bees this winter. She keeps 120 bee colonies on local farms in southern Dane and Rock counties, each of which contain tens of thousands of bees that pollinate the fruits and vegetables on the farm. She produces honey to sell at the Dane County Farmers' Market, under her "Bee Charmer" label.

"It's costing me thousands of dollars just to stay in business," says Celley, noting she has to buy whole new colonies of bees this year that are imported from out of state. What's at stake with the

widespread death of pollinators is not just the livelihood of America's beekeepers, but the American diet. "Without these animals, ecosystems would collapse," says Scott Hoffman Black, the executive director of the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, a nonprofit group fighting to save pollinators. "Our food system would collapse. We wouldn't eat our most nutritious foods – the fruits, the vegetables, many of the nuts that really make up a diverse diet. We cannot live on this planet without taking care of the bottom of the food chain. We just will not have the quality of life that we do now."

A Global Trend

Some beekeepers find their bees missing or dead and blame themselves. But the trend is a global one, and the idea that individual beekeepers are to blame worldwide doesn't sit well with Celley. "I just can't believe we're all idiots," she says. "I've been doing this for 35 years. I am a mindful beekeeper." That rings true for Derald Kettlewell, too. He's the President of the Wisconsin Honey Producers Association and runs the Badger State Apiaries in Greenfield in southwestern Milwaukee County. He has 100 hives in Milwaukee and Racine counties and sells his honey wholesale. This winter was not kind to his bees, either. "We probably lost in the neighborhood of 80%," says Kettlewell. "I would say this is just about the worst



I've experienced." Most bee die-offs occur in the winter, when there are no blooming flowers from which to gather pollen and the colony has to rely on the honey stored away in its hives to survive the bitter cold months. The population as a whole has to be large enough and strong enough to survive until April or May, when dandelions bloom, providing them with one of their first spring snacks.

"Over the last couple decades, there's just been more and more problems for the beekeepers in trying to keep their hives alive over the winter," says Kettlewell. "There are different strains of viruses. There are different strains of nosema [a fungus]. There are different types of mites. There's the hive beetle. All of those factors enter into the scenario when the hive gets weakened. And when the hive gets weakened, it doesn't survive through the winter."

And it's not just rural bees that are subject to stress. Nathan Clarke of Mad Urban Bees in Madison says he lost the majority of his bees this winter, too. It's his first year of commercial honey production after CropScience, a leading producer of insecticide sprays and seed treatments, says it "remains convinced that neonicotinoids are safe for bees" when used as directed. The company implies (*Continued on page 13*)