

Family Farm Defenders

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FFD Mission

Family Farm Defenders is a tax-deductible non-profit activist organization made up of farmers and concerned consumers. We are seeking ways to bring fair prices back to farmers and to insure a safe and sustainably produced

FFD Co-President's Message

BY JOHN KINSMAN



Bernard Barnaud and his wife were hoping to be at the Annual Meeting this year. Unfortunately he was suffering from the terrible snowstorm that devastated South Dakota and the other northern plain states. He lost two cows that he had in his corral and they drown standing up. He still had other cattle about 25 miles away and he had to get them home on that Saturday; he didn't know how they were doing. It had rained so much that it

was difficult to get close to them with the truck to load them. He was unsure how he was going to get them, in fact he thought he would have to drive them on foot...possibly even on the road. He spoke with me for about an hour and was talking about the other farmers whose cows were driven into the fences by the strong winds. Some of those cows died on those fences. Others were lost to drainage ditches, still others drowned by simply breathing. He thought there would be between 150,000 and 200,000 dead cattle, but it is simply too difficult to know at this point. A good number of them won't even be found until the spring. It was impossible to talk about how bad it was with the wind.

FFD Board member Stephen Bartlett and his wife are farmers in the Dominican Republic. He spends some time on his farm. He has a couple cows and some land. He was on the tour with the Haitians at the time of our meeting so he could not make it.

I asked Ben Burkett to be on our board. When I came to the meeting I was still awaiting his response. Not knowing that he had responded...promptly. But his message had been put in my spam folder! Thankfully, my daughter Susan Hunter found the message for me. Ben is the president of the NFFC (National Family Farm Coalition). He said in the first paragraph of his President's message that he wanted to thank me for how much I had done for NFFC. Then he went on to say that I was his mentor. I think he will make a valuable member of the board.

Rebekah Wilce and Anthony Pahnke and his friend Marlene Rojas were also elected to the board. They are all wonderful people and will make great additions to the board.

Dr. Gene Farley, who died on Friday the 8th of November, was a long time friend of FFD. He was executive director for the Farley center of peace justice and sustainability. He came to almost all of our FFD events. Farley was an outspoken advocate of universal healthcare. His loss is tragic.

FFD Co-President's Message

BY JOEL GREENO



The "Greater Good" an interesting concept, but for whom?

In 2010 at a meeting in DC a U.S. Dept. of Justice official, Mark Tobey, stated that anti-trust was not enforced as it used to be and that anti-trust law was not really about the law. He also stated that anti-trust was looked at in terms of the "Greater Good." He went on to say that in the U.S. it was more important to feed people cheaply than it was to enforce anti-trust law, and that total and complete vertical integration was acceptable. In some countries people spend 40-50% of their income on food, but the U.S. likes to keep that around 10% - hence deferring to the "Greater Good."

Why is it so important to only spend 10% on food? Answer: disposable income! We just can't afford to spend any more money on food when we need smart phones, computers, cars, four wheelers, jet skis, snowmobiles, long hunting or fishing trips, maybe even vacations.

All of this seems to make sense, right? But, who pays the ultimate price for the sake of the "Greater Good?". Wal-Mart,

Nestle, Kraft, Conagra, Cargill, Tyson, etc. - have they all tightened their belts to pay for this 10%? Absolutely, not!

Who has paid the price?

Answer: our farmers, our rural areas, our small towns, and us! How many DC politicians or DoJ officials have come out to see the effects of their pursuit of the "Greater Good?". The real victim is economic activity in rural America - it's been killed and left for dead. It is said that no dollar turns over more than the farm dollar, and that this farm dollar turns over 4-7 times in the local economy.

This is what grew and made our rural areas and small towns prosper. This has all been killed by what I call the "vacuum cleaner" effect. What does this mean? Every dollar spent at every Wal-Mart in the U.S. has to be wired to the head office in Bentonville, AR within 24 hours, putting an end to this economic activity. All of these aforementioned corporations have perfected this method, through consolidations, mergers, hostile takeovers, etc. Even our local CENEX and Land O' Lakes feed and supply stores have merged to form three mega co-ops: Allied Co-op, United Co-op, and Premier Co-op now covering two thirds of Wisconsin. So now the money I spend here in Kendall or Wilton doesn't stay here like it used to - it ends up in Beaver Dam or Hillsboro instead.

When our farmers have no

money, they can't go to town and buy goods and services and then our businesses are closed. This is the case in Kendall - the dairy store is close, so is the clothing store, the grocery, the hardware store, the barber shop, the feed mill.

And then our farmers have to quit. The number of farmers quitting in my area is staggering. Wisconsin in 1952 had 143,000 dairy farmers, in 2012 we had about 9,000 left. How much economic activity is created for our small towns by the remaining 9,000 dairy farms? Not much. It's time to tell the Dept. of Justice to get its act together and enforce anti-trust! That would really serve the "Greater Good."

Laura and I were able to attend the 2013 Farm Aid Concert in Saratoga Springs, NY on Sat. Sept. 21st. We started out at an advocates' meeting where Farm Aid staff laid out their new Farmer Resource Network and Farm Advocate Link. Goals of the meeting were to build cohesion among groups, to gather insight and feedback about the network, and to identify values, roles, and responsibilities in our collective work. This was all about creating a way to make it easier for all of us to connect. There was also a great tour on the Friday before the Farm Aid Concert to a dairy farm that had an on-farm store selling raw milk and was about to start on-farm processing. Friday night concluded with a wonderful dinner. (Cont. pg.4)