

To top it all off, dairy farmers in 1996 faced Black Friday. Just as Freedom to Farm was more like Freedom to Fail. Black Friday should have been called Red Friday since it involved lots of red ink.

Cheese Dump - 1996

In September of 1996 someone dumped cheese on the National Cheese Exchange in Green Bay, WI. The direct result was farmers losing 30% of their pay price in just one day - a catastrophe for farmers, to say the least. Then Governor of Wisconsin, Tommy G. Thompson, launched a task force to find out what had happened. The task force eventually found out that Kraft Foods was the culprit behind the Green Bay price fixing that had caused our nation's dairy farmers so much pain and hardship. At exactly the same time, Governor Thompson was raising money for the new Milwaukee Brewers Baseball Stadium, Miller Brewing company stepped up to the plate (pun intended) with a check for \$21 million for the stadium. At the time Miller Brewing was owned by - guess who? - Kraft Foods!Voila!

Chicago Mercantile Exchange

The formal investigation ends, the National Cheese Exchange is quietly closed, and insider cheese trading moves into the true abyss - the Chicago Mercantile Exchange (CME). A New Chapter in Awful begins for America's dairy farmers. And in this new chapter, ag mergers of all kinds go unchecked. Dairy Farmers of America (DFA) is formed in 1998: Dean's grows to mammoth proportions; and National Dairy Holding is created.

Dept. of Justice Investigation 2004

So where in all this mess is the Department of Justice and especially the DoJ Anti-Trust Division? Well, finally in 2004, Ali Ramadan of the Department of Justice began an investigation into the activities of the US dairy industry - in particular, the coordination of Deans, Dairy Farmers of



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America, and National Dairy Holdings. Ali Ramadan worked on this investigation for the next two years. Upon completion, it was turned over to US Attorney General, Alberto Gonzales. Unfortunately, instead of US farmers getting justice it was Ali Ramadan who got terminated. That's right - Ali Ramadan lost his job for doing his job, and a good job at that.

Ramadan Sues DoJ- 2004

Ali Ramadan had to sue DoJ to get his pension after his thirty year career. DoJ agreed to give him his pension as long as he never spoke of his dairy investigation - an investigation in which Ali Ramadan said that the US dairy industry was more corrupt than Enron. Wow! Really? So we have solid evidence of real corruption - an investigation to prove it - and nothing happens. Farmers lose again. It was mentioned that Ali Ramadan sealed this case in such a way that it could not be tampered with or destroyed. Good to know...

Joint Listening Session -2009

So, after years of farmer complaints and public demands, in 2009 it was announced that DoJ and USDA would hold joint listening sessions on agricultural competition issues. Meetings took place to pull together an agenda - at one of those meetings held by

the National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC), in Washington, DC. Mark Tobey from DoJ was invited to speak. Mark Tobey was charged with picking individuals to speak at the listening sessions. The answer to one of our questions came to light at this meeting: "How did US agriculture get into such a mess"?

The Law is not the Law Anymore
I specifically asked Mr. Tobey why DoJ did not do a better job of enforcing anti-trust in agriculture? His answer: "Technically, the law is not the law anymore." So I asked, "If the law is not the law anymore, what is it?"

The "Greater Good" Definition

Mr. Tobey said, "It's about the Greater Good." I asked him to define the Greater Good. Mr. Tobey said, "If total vertical integration feeds people cheaper, DOJ would not stand in its way." Well, I can attest that answer did not sit very well with our crowd, and Mr. Tobey got an earful. I feel that up to this point Mr. Tobey believed all this farm controversy was a misunderstanding or just a different point of view. For the first time, Mr. Tobey realized this was more - that there were deep-seated issues at hand with a lot of passion behind them.

Farmers are Pawns in Corporate Agribusiness Game

So, the problem at hand is if "The Greater Good" is a common theory or common practice, it's no wonder we are in this mess. This means our problems are by design: mega mergers, anti-farmer bills, no DoJ protection, and endless bad policy. Farmers are just pawns in this corporate game, set up to fight over crumbs as they plot to eliminate us and replace us with factory farms and a willing workforce. So what do we intend to do about "The Greater Good" policy? Fight with all that is in us: honor, integrity and dignity. It is time to expose this for what it is - a corporate agribusiness take over that has been promoted since the early 1960s. It is high time to take this big train off the tracks.

Why We All Should Join the Grand Alliance for a Stronger Better U.S. Postal Service

By: John E. Peck, executive director, Family Farm Defenders

Having grown up in a rural area the U.S. Post Office was almost a magical institution in my childhood memory. I would wait in anticipation for the oranges my grandma would often order from Florida that would arrive through the blizzard right to our farm in Minnesota just in time for the holidays. As an avid stamp collector, I also loved it when our friendly small town postal clerk would be sure to point out the newest commemorative issues to me. Having made many friends from travels around the world, the USPS was also a key link for me to the rest of the globe even in the age of the internet.

Many other people in the U.S. feel the same. In fact, the USPS has one of the highest favorability ratings (90+%) of all government agencies - certainly much higher than the FDA, USDA, or IRS... Since 1775 when Benjamin Franklin became the very first Postmaster General, the USPS has faithfully fulfilled the many goals that one can now find inscribed outside the entrance of the U.S. Postal Museum in Washington DC: "Bond of the Scattered Family; Enlarger of the Common Life; Carrier of News and Knowledge; Instrument of Trade and Commerce."

USPS Privatization Attack

Yet, today the USPS is under relentless privatization attack by those who clearly don't appreciate the value of such a long standing public service that provides affordable universal reliable communication for all U.S. citizens. Under the pretense that the USPS is "bankrupt," Pres. Trump and other neoliberal free marketers are now hellbent to impose an austerity program that has already shuttered half of the country's mail processing centers and led to longer delivery



times. Any letter mailed in Madison must now go all the way to Milwaukee and then come back, adding 2-3 days on a typical delivery. One out of ten USPS offices have been put on the auction block, and over a third of those remaining have seen their hours of operation curtailed dramatically - this decision having the worst impact on rural areas.

USPS Shutdown Prairie City, SD

To give but one example, when the USPS office was shut down in Prairie City, SD - saving the federal government a "whopping" \$19,000 - the true costs were much higher for the folks living there. Like my post office in Rockville, MN (which - thankfully - survived), the post office in Prairie City, SD was part of the quilt that held that community together, but is now torn apart. As Daniel Beckman, a widowed farmer, told the Wall Street Journal for a Jan. 24, 2011 article, "that was the gathering place for people to come in the mornings, have a cup of coffee or can of pop, and visit - but we don't have that any more." Those who rely upon postal delivery of medical prescriptions must now wait several more days for the package, coming across state lines from Hettinger, ND nearly 40 miles away...

Undermining USPS

How did this quite preventable (and orchestrated) disaster come about? Well, one needs to go back to the late 1970s and early 1980s when the government greased the skids for private entities to undermine the viability of the USPS by granting special exemptions to UPS and FedEx to compete. In Canada the Canada Post at least has the mandate and authority to insure it remains economically viable - not so in the U.S. where the Postal Regulatory Commission - whose members are appointed by the president - can veto any price changes the USPS might propose to actually cover delivery costs. At just 50 cents to deliver a first class letter, USPS rates are among the lowest in the industrialized world, which is why its supposed competitors still rely upon the USPS to deliver so many of their own packages. Up to 30% of Fedex packages are actually delivered by USPS, and Amazon sends 40% of its packages through USPS saving itself up to 75% in shipping costs. Yet, when Pres. Trump tweets about Amazon "scamming" the USPS he somehow fails to mention the fact that it is his own political appointees who prevent the postal service from charging competitive market rates! *(Continued pg.6)*