

"Where Do We Go From Here?" is a feature service of the Prairie Centre.

The Prairie Policy Centre is an independent public policy think tank whose mission is "to advance ideas on wealth creation in order to enhance the economic and social well being of the prairie region."

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WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Politics and Grain: 2006 Canadian Wheat Board Election December 13, 2006

The CWB Election is in the books for 2006. Four candidates for the single desk emerged victorious with one candidate for pro choice winning the other seat.

It is apparent that fear and rhetoric are alive and well in western Canada. But one must respect the voters who did manage to take the time and mail their ballot in.

If this was only a vote on the single desk and that is what it will be portrayed as, the break out will look like this:

District 1 at 56.4% in for a choice candidate with 43.6% for the single desk.

District 3 was 66.2% in favour of single desk versus 33.8% for pro choice. In District 5, 59.2% voted for single desk while 40.8% voted for choice. While in district 7, 55% voted for the single desk and 45% voted for pro choice. In the Manitoba District 9, 65.9% voted for the single desk, while 34.1% voted for choice.

The former Canadian Agriculture minister, the Hon. Otto Lang was on my radio program on the weekend. It was apparent that nothing has changed in farm policy debates.

In 1974, when he wanted to change the CROW rate, the resistance to change was so strong that he backed away. He also said on the weekend that his biggest regret was not following through on the Crow change.

The number that he used on the weekend in 1974 was a \$7 billion payout. It had Cabinet approval.

The fear mongering continued for 20 years - rhetoric flew, and farmers ended up with \$1.3 billion. Because

farmers were lied to by farm groups, corporations who were not ready for change, it cost farmers monumentally.

The dollar amount is bad enough; however, it was 25 lost years that hurt the western Canadian economy the most.

The Western Producer of the day, the NFU, the Pools, and WAYNE EASTER (who was the President of the NFU from 1982-1993) all said that it could not change, but it did.

Wayne Easter fought vigorously to oppose the payout of the CROW and WGTA.

Otto said on the weekend that after a change he made to quota allocations in the 70's, the NFU issued buttons that said Otto Lang is a 4-letter word (I've also seen one that said HANG LANG) and that the NFU was going on and on about how he was going to kill the family farm.

Nothing has changed.

Enter the Pools. Otto said the CROW had become sacred. So much so that people forgot where it came from and what it represented. Media can do that. Organizations with ulterior motives can do that.

And today when Wayne Easter stands with the Leader of the Opposition and the President of the CWB, everyone forgets what he did to the western economy.

For the majority of farmers, it is like nothing happened and all is forgotten.

A line that I like and use is this:
Those who do not study history are bound to repeat it.

The next time you see a politician, elected official or organization standing up for farmers, please ask yourself three questions:

1. What proof do they have to take that position?
2. What is in it for them?
3. Does this sound like the CROW/WGTA debate?

For half of the CWB districts, you had a vote on nothing but rhetoric and fear. And the rhetoric came from both sides.

Demand better.
Demand proof.
Demand accountability.

You are the CEO of your farm. You would not make a decision to buy anything without facts. You are accountable to your family who are your shareholders.

Remember the only one that is looking after you is you - no one else gives a damn. And if you ever want a refresher - take a look at the CROW/WGTA debate.

Ken Beswick, the now deceased former Commissioner of the CWB, may have been right.

This industry does deserve itself.

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