

~ By Advocacy Coordinator, Judith Moses

Enthusiasm is building across the organization for new advocacy efforts. The updated Advocacy Manual should be available shortly, its main changes taking into account how electronic communication and social media are transforming advocacy methods and making advocacy more easily accessible to Members than ever before.

Small Abattoirs in Ontario

We have written to the Premier and OMAFRA on the closure of small abattoirs in light of the growing local food movement, and we are awaiting confirmation of a meeting with Carol Mitchell. The Advocacy Coordinator and Malcolm WI (Grey-Bruce Area) are collaborating on a major advocacy campaign. The local food market continues to grow and both federal and provincial governments must ensure the viability of small abattoirs. The Malcolm WI initiative is proving to be a useful advocacy model in how to: build local alliances (Christian Farmers, Farmers' Union and Federation of Agriculture, etc.); engage the public (about 300 people came to a public meeting); jointly fund the effort (Malcolm WI and each of the Grey-Bruce farm groups put \$250 into a fund); manage a media strategy; and adjust our thinking as issues evolve from the original resolution.



For more information on the current demands of small abattoirs and other high profile FWIO issues, a detailed Advocacy Report can be found on the FWIO website at www.fwio.on.ca. Judith Moses can be reached by email at judithmoses@rogers.com.



RIGHT: In June of 2010, Malcolm WI held a ROSE Session to educate and engage the public on this issue.

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Farm Forums flourished when radio was king

Much copied around the world, they became one of the most successful adult education ventures ever developed. But they died with the advent of television

by CAMPBELL CORK

Canadian Farm Radio Forums had a short run of just 24 years – from 1941 to 1965 – but the movement had a giant impact on the face of Canada.

In Ontario alone, Farm Forums were responsible for founding the Farm Credit Corporation, many farm co-operatives and numerous credit unions. Never again would so many stimulating and controversial discussions of farm topics fill church basements, one-room schools and farm kitchens.

Farm Forums began in the desperate years of the Second World War and continued into the post-war boom years of optimism and hope. They started when radio was king and struggled into the era when television took over the throne.

Members of each forum met Monday evening and tuned into a CBC broadcast, which led them through a discussion of a current topic of interest to the farm community. Prior to the broadcast, each forum would receive printed copies of the program guide to help with the discussion. The guide presented different sets of questions for both adults and youth.

Following the discussion, the participants were encouraged to report their results to their provincial Farm Forum Office. These were tabulated and broadcast the next week. With a total of 35 at one time, Huron County was said to hold the record for the county with the most individual forums.



Tollgate Farm Forum meeting, 1954, at the Wellington County farm of Alex Gillies, seen seated third from right. Tractor safety was on their minds.

Nationally, the number of participants in the Farm Forums peaked in 1950 when 1,606 groups were registered with about 20,000 forum participants. About half the groups were from Ontario. The initiative was jointly sponsored by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, the Canadian Association for Adult Education and the CBC.

In Seaforth, for instance, a Farm Forum discussion of co-operative principles resulted in a producer-owned farmer's co-operative. Farm Forums were responsible for the Huron County Medical Services, which provided hospital coverage to its members long before national health care was even a twinkle in the federal eye.

Another forum called on local school boards to insulate the ceilings of their one-room schools, to bring in electricity and to provide movable seats. The SS#5 Culross Farm Forum in Bruce County sponsored a barn meeting to determine how to produce more grade A hogs. And the Green Bush Farm Forum in Wellington helped organize the Harriston Farm Co-op. Similarly, the Teeswater Co-operative came from that area's Do-Come-In Farm Forum.

Despite all the serious business conducted at Farm Forum meetings, no Farm Forum worth its salt adjourned without making time for a few rounds of euchre and serving lunch.

The man credited with the idea of the weekly broadcasts was the son of a Grey County farmer, the late Alex Sim. Over numerous conversations in my kitchen, he told me that the reasons were many for the demise of the Farm Forum movement. They included chronic under-funding and worries of politicians about the growing power of the movement.

But, he said, the bottom line was that the Canadian Farm Radio Forums were totally dependent on the weekly radio broadcast. When the CBC pulled the plug on the broadcast, the Farm Forums went down the drain.

Farm Radio Forums were uniquely Canadian. They remain one of the most successful and largest adult education systems ever used in the world, and they have been copied around the world. BF

Campbell Cork lives and writes in Mount Forest.



Mar WI's Annual Dinner

The last Saturday of May means only one thing on the Bruce Peninsula - it is Mar Women's Institute's Annual Fish Dinner. Homemade pies baked by Members and friends of Mar WI (Grey-Bruce Area) are served with locally caught White Fish along with all the trimmings of course! Each year the community has a chance to visit, eat, and many volunteer to help. Nearly 300 guests mark their calendar and attend this event each year.

Pictured is Mar WI Secretary, Connie Adams - aka "Pie Lady."