

FREE TRADE, FARM CRISIS MAJOR ELECTION ISSUES

Two of the most important issues confronting farmers in this federal election are free trade and the farm finance crisis, according to Raye-Anne Briscoe, Ontario Co-ordinator, National Farmers Union.

The election, slated for November 21, provides Canada's primary producers with an opportunity to press for substantial changes, noted Briscoe. While the N.F.U. remains a non-partisan organization, its members are committed to ensuring that farmers' concerns are fully addressed by candidates of all political parties. "Free trade is the most critical issue facing, not just family farmers, but the nation as a whole," explained Briscoe. "There is no doubt that thousands of farm families will be adversely affected if the Reagan-Mulroney deal is implemented. This pact must be defeated."

The NFU Co-ordinator pointed out that orderly marketing programs for farm commodities will be seriously undermined as a direct result of the Free Trade Agreement, leading to lower commodity prices and reduced farm incomes. In addition, stabilization and price support programs will be phased out as Canada and the U.S. work toward ending so-called 'farm subsidies.' "Free trade will mean we lose much of our ability to develop domestic agricultural policies," contended Briscoe. "Our farm policies will be set in Washington even more than they are presently."

A related issue of concern to Canada's rural community is the farm finance crisis, noted Briscoe. Several factors, including high interest rates, low commodity prices and rising costs have contributed to an unprecedented exodus of family farmers which has left thousands of rural communities in turmoil. Government policies to date, she added, have failed to adequately address this problem. "It's up to farmers to tell politicians what policies are needed to restore stability and security to the farming sector," she stated. "The Free Trade Agreement must be stopped in its tracks. Orderly marketing of farm products to ensure farmers receive their cost of production must be strengthened, and our domestic markets have to be secured."

Briscoe concluded that other measures including improvements to stabilization, crop insurance, farm credit and disaster assistance programs need to be taken immediately to stem the farm crisis. She also called for "massive soil restoration and water conservation programs" to protect precious agricultural resources.

NFU Locals and Districts across the country will be working to ensure that candidates in all federal ridings address the issues. Contact: Raye-Anne Briscoe (613) 432-5728.



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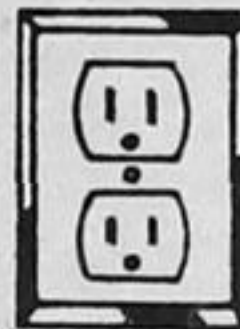
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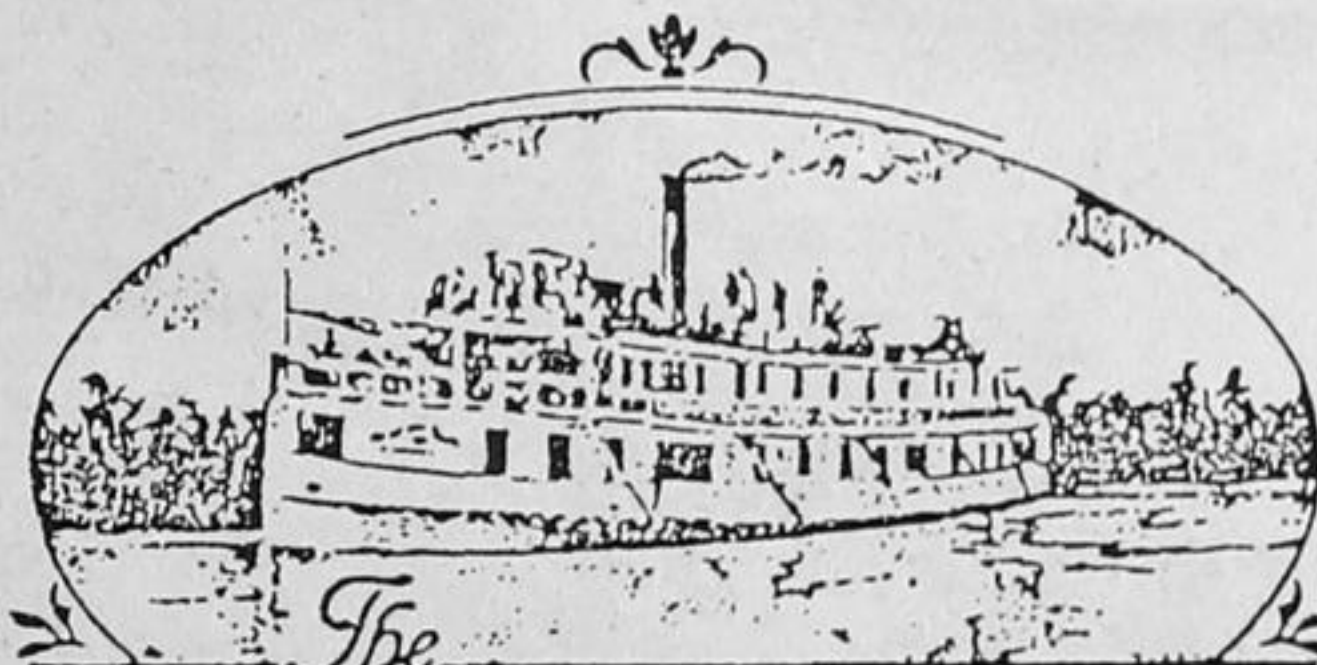
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