

NEWS BRIEFS

LAVAL UNIVERSITY

Union management met with representatives of Laval University's Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences on November 13. Faculty members talked about the courses and services they offer, and then the two groups exchanged views on issues of mutual interest. The possibility was discussed of university students using our publications more often to announce the results of their research.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

A meeting took place on November 15 between UPA management and Mr. Pierre Blais, M.P. for Bellechasse and parliamentary secretary to the minister of Agriculture. Four important matters were discussed: the zones hit by the 1983 crop failure, national tri-partite stabilization, western grain transportation and, naturally, agricultural funding.

ENVIRONMENT

Also on November 15, UPA management met with the Environment minister and deputy minister. The UPA submitted a brief requesting financial assistance equal to 90% of the cost of manure storage facilities. The minister gave no guarantee as to compensation for existing facilities and expressed the opinion that this matter should be discussed with the minister of Agriculture.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Province-wide consultations are to be staged by the standing committee on agriculture to discuss young farmers, financing and farm indebtedness. In view of this, Union management will ask that this event be made distinguishable from the socio-economic summit scheduled for the same time period.

CONSULTATIONS

The Québec Government is in the midst of a consultation tour of the province in an attempt to develop a policy on the "family". Symposiums will be held in the various regions and a series of hearings province-wide. Because of the importance of this issue in agriculture, the Union intends to be present.

Similarly, the Union will ask to participate at the provincial conference on the economic security of Québec women.



PREVENTION

It is now confirmed: a special week devoted to the prevention of occupational accidents will be held throughout the Union next spring. All activities will be organized around the theme, "Together let's grow more cautious."



GENERAL COUNCIL

The general council convened on November 20 and 21. Among other subjects, the financial situation of the regional federations received close attention. In view of the financial hardship of the small federations, the general council will be conducting a study aimed at defining the exact problem and then determining the necessary courses of action to be taken.

The council reviewed the extensive research done on crop insurance by a special committee. It was agreed that a provincial study day on the subject be held on December 11 to prepare for a possible meeting with the government authorities concerned.

The general council accepted the principle of personalized services to producers in financial difficulty. This question was addressed at the general convention.

LAC ST-PIERRE

On November 22, Union management met with ministers Chevette and Ouellette. It appears that a solution is now under study and a proposal is expected to be made public shortly.

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UPA NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

OUR SOLIDARITY IS OUR STRENGTH

The latest figures confirm what we've known all along: agriculture in Québec, as in many other parts of the world, is in a deep depression that is ravaging our rural areas. The number of bankruptcies is attaining new heights, and 13% of Québec farmers are now in dire financial straits. This is an alarming situation... it is also totally unacceptable. In the meantime, despite the urgency of this matter and our numerous cries for help, our governments refuse to act. This too is totally unacceptable.

This question was naturally at the heart of the debate during our sixtieth annual general convention. Of course, we would have preferred a different context to this for an anniversary year. Faced with this situation, however, we must not let ourselves become discouraged or defeatist; on the contrary, we must summon up our courage and our strength, convinced that together we can and will come out of it.

Despite escalating problems, our first priority must be to help those who, for reasons beyond their control, now find themselves on the brink of bankruptcy. It's time to put an end to this catastrophe, to this human suffering that is tearing our rural fabric apart.

One thing is sure, it will not be an easy task. With a bit of imagination and if everybody joins in, we're bound to succeed. We must absolutely find ways to help these people. Starting with the local syndicates, all levels of the Union must become involved and do their share. I invite not only all our Union administrators but also each and every one of you to participate in this great mission. You won't regret it.

Mutual aid and solidarity have always characterized the farming community. Without these two values, farm unionism would not be as strong and successful as it is today. "All for one and one for all" is a very old recipe, but one which I believe is still the best.

After sixty years of making history, we know more than ever before that OUR SOLIDARITY IS OUR STRENGTH. If we remain united, if all of us work together, we will succeed again in doing great things. The farming community as a whole will reap the fruit of our labours. Let's think about it and act without delay.

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Lamb and Sheep Producers



STORMY DEBATE

The annual general meeting of the *Fédération des producteurs d'agneaux et moutons du Québec* held recently in Longueuil developed into a stormy debate. As a result, quite a few items on the agenda were not introduced.

Things took a turn for the worse after the reading of the auditor's report on the *Fédération's* financial position for the year ended on August 31, 1984. A deficit of \$40,990 was recorded for this fiscal year, bringing the *Fédération's* cumulative deficit to \$70,296.

It was proposed by UPA president Jacques Proulx and accepted by the majority of delegates that the spending estimates for the current fiscal year be increased by \$70,000. Mr. Proulx is convinced the Department of Agriculture will have no choice but to give in to lamb producers' demand for a subsidy.

Producers listened to Carole Moisan's report on the activities of the committee handling contributions. They learnt that ten or so slaughterhouses had received legal notice to collect one dollar for each head of sheep or lamb slaughtered. The *Fédération* foresees the possibility of taking legal action against slaughterhouses and auctions who do not remit the contribution. Of the \$7,000 allocated to committees for expenses, an amount of \$3,000 has been budgeted for this sector.

The *Fédération* will spend the remaining \$4,000 on marketing. The fact that such a small amount is allocated to the marketing committee prompted a lengthy debate. According to many producers, the only reason a joint plan was accepted in the first place was so that the *Fédération* could organize the marketing of meat.

The matters raised emphasized the divergence between the outlying areas and the areas close to Montreal and Québec City. It is obvious that producers from outlying areas do not face the same difficulties, nor have the same priorities. They want the *Fédération* to put all their energies into organizing a marketing strategy. They are too far from consumers and consequently it is impossible for them to develop a clientèle.

Laurentian UPA Federation

PROPERTY TAX CAUSES CONCERN

The provincial government's intention to modify its policy on property tax in agricultural zones is giving the membership of the Laurentian UPA Federation cause for concern.

A hundred or so people attended the special general meeting held in Mont-Laurier on October 26. Following lengthy discussions, delegates passed a resolution seeking, first of all, to preserve the "status quo" for the maximum taxable value in accordance with section 214 of the municipal taxation act and, secondly, to obtain a refund from the Department of Agriculture equal to 70% of their total property tax bill, including a maximum for dwellings. This maximum would prevent farm producers, whose main occupation is not farming, from obtaining large refunds for very expensive dwellings.

Through this resolution, producers are asking that the Department of Municipal Affairs reimburse the difference between the \$150/acre and the scientific agricultural evaluation. The Department is presently refunding municipalities the difference in taxes between the maximum evaluation permitted under Section 214 and the scientific

evaluation. Producers say certain municipalities over-evaluate farm properties to obtain exorbitant refunds. In fact, scientific evaluation is based on speculative value, not on agricultural value.

Certain municipalities have acquired the rights-of-way for abandoned railway lines in rural areas and converted them into bicycle paths. Producers believe these sections of land should be returned to their original owners, namely themselves.

A group of producers have instituted legal proceedings against Hydro-Québec for using the "picloram" defoliant. Because of the resolution adopted unanimously by the delegates, the federation administrators are in a strong position and intend helping all those whose wells are now polluted as a result of the defoliation work carried out by the power company.

Among the many resolutions passed that day was one dealing with the electoral promises made by the Conservatives before their election victory.

Marketing of Vegetables



EXPLORING NEW AVENUES

A two-day horticultural symposium took place recently at Mont-Gabriel attended by some 100 people. Producers, wholesalers, packers, government advisers and UPA directors talked about new approaches to the marketing of fresh vegetables in Québec.

Discussions on the first day dealt with the marketing problems encountered by fresh vegetable producers and buyers. Cited as the major problems were: no consensus, mismanagement of market demand and lack of information on prices and quantities. Also mentioned were the joint plans which, while working on the whole (apples, potatoes and onions), cause difficulties because of their complexity and the failure to adhere to regulations.

Solutions were proposed on the second day. It was suggested, as an experiment, that willing producers group together for marketing purposes. There are already organizations where marketing is a joint effort and the price is set according to a "pool", notably the *Société agricole des producteurs et emballeurs de carottes de Sherrington (SAPEQ)* and the *Coopérative d'oignons* from the same locality.

The aim is not to impose plans on all producers, but rather to adopt a gradual, step-by-step approach to resolving problems, with producers participating on a voluntary basis. The formulas contemplated may not be spectacular and will no doubt be different from the joint plans we know today. They should be flexible enough, however, to suit the various productions: it is inconceivable that the formula used for preservable fruits and vegetables would also be applied to stock that must be cleared quickly.

Study Day on

MARKETING EGGS

Over 200 people gathered in Drummondville on November 22 to discuss the future of egg marketing in Québec and to attempt to reconcile the role of the sales agency with that of producer-vendors.

The debate was in response to the fact that producer-vendors and Ontario producers largely control egg marketing in Québec to the detriment of the sales agency. Of the 103 million dozens of eggs sold annually in Québec, Fedco presently distributes 32 million dozens per year and producer-vendors 35 million dozens. Québec producers meet about 70% of the province's requirements; the difference is made up for the most part by Ontario, which poses a serious threat since production costs are lower there.

Among the 14 speakers who expressed an opinion were representatives of wholesalers, distributors, the sales agency, producer-vendors, consumers, the MAPAQ, bankers and the UPA. While a number of major buyers indicated they preferred to buy their eggs from the sales agency, this opinion was apparently not shared by the majority.

Fedco president Claude Bernard favours an even greater centralization of supply, whereas the manager of the *Ferme St-Zotique*, Donald Grégoire, believes the producer-vendor system is more efficient in meeting regional needs.

The point of contention is not the primary role of the agency to fix prices, but rather the current practice by certain producer-vendors of undercutting the sales agency.

Some producers want the powers of the sales agency to be expanded so that it can handle egg distribution on a provincial scale. Others feel the agency should specialize in selling only to major clients and leave the rest of the market to producer-vendors.

A consensus of opinion emerged on only two points: to recapture the Montreal market, which is losing more and more ground to Ontario producers, and to abolish specials on eggs.

After six meetings, the marketing committee has not come up with any new solutions to existing problems in the area of egg marketing. Committee president René Bernard believes the system must take producer-vendors into account and the agency must not compete with them. He also feels the agency should handle promotion and redistribution of supply and Québec producers should pool their money to compete with eggs imported from Ontario.

