

**Show Transcript
Deconstructing Dinner
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Transcript: Ruth Taylor**

Jon Steinman: And welcome to Deconstructing Dinner – produced and recorded in the studios of Kootenay Co-op Radio in Nelson, British Columbia. I'm Jon Steinman.

Deconstructing Dinner is a weekly one-hour program that aims to discuss all there is to know about our food, but most importantly, how the food choices we make impact ourselves, our communities and the planet.

On the surface, it may appear rather easy to walk into a grocery store or a restaurant, place an item into the shopping cart or select an appetizer off of a menu, but the second any of us choose to begin reading a label or asking a waiter or waitress a question about the origins of a menu item, this daily routine of making food choices becomes much more complicated. A level of complication that is very unique to North Americans, because as is the case throughout many cultures around the globe, food is inextricably linked to culture, where food choices do not require many questions, as these traditions and processes have been unchanged for generations.

Here in North America on the other hand, the origin of many of our foods is unknown – where and how was it grown, who grew it, what was the cow fed and how was it treated, what is soy lecithin that seems to be in almost every packaged food we buy. The more we question, the more complicated it all becomes.

One of the more recent experiments to hit grocery store shelves and restaurant menus is the prevalence of genetically-modified foods – an experiment that labels on food do not indicate is being administered to the unknowing consumer – you and I.

And so on today's program we will hear speeches from three individuals who have all become involved in one way or another with genetically modified foods. We will hear Arran Stephens – the founder and president of Richmond-based Nature's Path Foods, Percy Schmeiser – the Saskatchewan farmer who is now in his second legal battle with agri-food giant Monsanto, and Colin Palmer – the chair of the Powell River regional district.

increase music and fade out

Genetically modified plants destined for food have only been approved here in Canada since 1994 and there are now over 70 approved genetically modified plant varieties being grown here in this country. Now for the most part, a browse through the produce section would not yield many modified fruits and vegetables; the most widely modified varieties of plants are crops – the staple ingredients in the majority of our food. In the United States for example, about half of the corn planted is already genetically modified, about three quarters of cotton is genetically modified, and almost all soybean crops are genetically modified. Now it is these among other ingredients that make their way into processed foods.

It is estimated that between 70-80% of all processed foods in grocery stores contain some genetically modified ingredients, but there has not yet been regulations passed that would see mandatory labeling of these ingredients. This in itself will be a topic for a future broadcast.

But this topic of genetic modification of our food supply has of course led to heated debate since these plants were first approved, and the ways in which a one-hour radio broadcast could touch on this topic are countless. But regardless of what side you choose to take on the issue, there is one certainty that any science used to promote the increasing prevalence of genetically modified organisms, is just as much at risk of being proved a mistake, no differently than the countless scientific theories that have also met such a fate.

Here in Canada, our federal government is responsible for approving such varieties of plants, and in granting such approval, our government places genetically modified plants for food into a category known as “novel foods.” And just when you would like to think our own government would be 100% behind allowing such an experiment to take place, they define the novel foods category as including, and I quote, “food products with no history of safe use as a food.” The question then becomes, have Canadians ever been asked if we want an increasing percentage of our food falling into such a category that is deemed to have no history of safe use.

soundbite

So in presenting today’s topic of genetically modified foods, we will be hearing a selection of speeches recorded in June of 2005. These speakers were recorded in Vancouver during the launch of the GE-Free Canada campaign – a campaign that aims to see GE-Free zones created across the country – GE-Free indicating areas that ban any genetically engineered plants from making their way into the ground. Finishing off today’s broadcast we will hear from Colin Palmer, who represents the region of Powell River which is one of Canada’s first communities to become GE-Free. The second speaker to be heard on the broadcast will be Percy Schmeiser – the renowned Saskatchewan farmer who was taken to court by the agriculture industry’s most influential company – Monsanto. Schmeiser’s crop of non-genetically modified canola was through open pollination, contaminated in 1997 by a neighboring field of GM Canola, and Monsanto sued Schmeiser for illegally planting the company’s property. But

first we will hear the speech given by Arran Stephens. Arran is the founder and president of Nature's Path Foods – a large Richmond, BC based company that produces a line of organic foods, he is an internationally-published author and he also sits on the Vancouver Food Policy Council. Again this recording is courtesy of the Necessary Voices Society, and here's Arran Stephens speaking on genetically modified foods.

Arran Stephens: About three weeks ago. I'm not sure the exact time. There was an all party candidate meeting in Kitsilano. The green party was there, the NDP was there and the liberals were there, and no work party and a couple of others. Anyway it was a very interesting get together it was pretty charged and partisan but the question that I had to ask of the candidates was what is your position on making British Columbia a GE free zone?

The NDP candidate said we support mandatory labeling of genetically engineered food we would like to see by 2010 that British Columbia would be a GE free zone and the Green Party candidate said we've always been for making Canada a GE free zone and particularly British Columbia and if we are elected, unfortunately they didn't make it, we would make BC a GE free zone immediately. And the Liberal candidate mentioned that it's got to be science based and we have to study this matter further, basically really didn't answer directly. So, I was a little disappointed in their answer and so I'm sending them a copy, Gordon Campbell and the other person who got elected in our riding, a book called *Seeds of Deception* so they can understand the question a little more clearly about the risks and dangers of genetically engineered food.

I don't consider myself political, that is partisan. I like to kind of keep middle of the road but I would support any good person with a good idea at any time any place. I think because human beings have such poor judgment we get ourselves time and time again into a corner environmentally and ecologically that we're putting the planet at risk, we're putting the future of our society at risk and we're putting the future generations at risk. So since sometimes the wisdoms of humans doesn't prevail in large scale, I think sometimes we need to look at the animal kingdom to learn some lessons.

I'd like to share a very brief story about the wisdom of squirrels, elk, deer, raccoons and mice. For years a retired Iowa farmer fed squirrels on his farm through the winter months by placing corn cobs and feeders. One year just for the heck of it he decided to see if the squirrels had a preference for BT corn or natural corn. He put natural corn in one feeder and BT corn in another about 20 feet away. The squirrels ate all the corn off the natural cobs but didn't touch the BT corn. The farmer dutifully refilled the feeder with more natural corn and sure enough it was soon gone. The BT corn however remained untouched. BT corn is a corn that has been gene spliced with a pesticide, a naturally occurring pesticide, but in its unnatural form of course it has questionable results. The retired farmer got curious what if the BT variety was the squirrels only choice to find out he didn't refill the natural corn. At the time Iowa plunged into the coldest days of winter but day after day the BT corn cob remained intact, the squirrels went elsewhere for their food. After about ten days the squirrels ate about an inch of the tip of an ear but that's all.

The farmer felt sorry for the squirrels and put natural corn back into the feeders which the squirrels once again consumed.

Now this is another story about an elk. Captive elk escaped and took up residence in our crops of organic corn and soy. It had total access to neighbouring fields of GM crops but they never went into them - Susan and Mark Fitzgerald of Minnesota.

So just one more story writer Steve Sprinkle described a herd of about 40 deer that ate from a field of organic soy beans but not the round up ready variety across the road likewise raccoons devoured organic corn but didn't touch an ear of BT corn growing down the road even the mice will move on down the line if given an alternative to those crops.

I shared that from *Seeds of Deception*, which is an excellent book, and I brought about five copies with me but they sold out immediately, the proceeds of which are donated to the Council of Canadians. We have supported Percy Schmeisers fight against the Monsanto giant and unfortunately wasn't successful but in many ways he was successful. I think Monsanto underestimated Percy, he's a real true David fighting against Goliath. (applause) I think Monsanto people thought that he just fell off the back of a turnip truck, but no this quiet man, a very thoughtful man, a considerate man, a man who has been a pillar of his community in his entire lifetime and served his community. He has risen up against the injustices and criminal behavior of a huge company out of control. Not only had he been hurt financially and in other ways his reputation in the community and hundreds if not thousands of other farmers like Percy in North America and in other countries. He has become kind of a magnet, a focal point, and has had personal meetings with Prince Charles has been honored in many countries throughout the world for his stand up against Monsanto and the injustices that they have perpetrated. He has just been a very eloquent convincing spokesperson for the fight against genetic contamination.

I'll just give you a little bit of a story of an example of economic loss. Canada was a huge exporter of canola oil to other countries. Sales were in the hundreds of millions of dollars annually, I'll just explain our experience. When I say we, Nature's Path, we use over 600,000 pounds of organic canola oil a year. And because of the contamination problem with canola oil we have now completely switched away from canola oil to another edible oil crop, an organic edible oil crop. Another indication of there's a good crop a good product but unfortunately we can't use it anymore. This is a very graphic example of genetic trespass. I said a few years ago in an article that was published in the New York Times that there's no wall high enough to keep out genetic contamination. We've got to do something about this there is hope through identity preservation and a growing commitment to sustainable agriculture and organic farming we can hopefully keep the tide back. But some of these genes are bound to slip through, unfortunately, this is what we got to fight against. And we've joined, Nature's Path, have joined in the fight with the Saskatchewan Organic Directorates and their class action lawsuit against Monsanto and Bayer CropScience due to the liability issue of the contamination of organic crops by this unwanted technology. We as consumers as farmers as processors we never asked for this it came on us unasked for but we do have to face it and we have to fight it together.

Jon Steinman: And that was Arran Stephens – the founder and president of Richmond-based, Nature's Path Foods.

If you're just tuning in, this is Deconstructing Dinner – a weekly one-hour radio program designed to discuss our food – how safe is our food supply and what implications accompany the food choices we make.

On today's program we explore the controversial inclusion of genetically modified organisms into our food supply, and in doing so we are hearing three speeches recorded in June of 2005 by the Vancouver-based Necessary Voices Society. The entire recording from this event can be found at www.necessaryvoices.org. And you can also visit the Deconstructing Dinner website at www.cjly.net/deconstructingdinner to find out more about today's topic, past and future broadcasts. Also on the website you will find a recently launched podcast feed available off of the website, for any of you who would like to carry this program around in your pocket.

soundbite

The next speaker at the Vancouver event was Percy Schmeiser – one of the most notable and recognized figures throughout the debate over genetically modified foods. In a way, Schmeiser was and is simply one of thousands of farmers who are subject to the incredible power of seed and pesticide companies. For those who are perhaps not familiar with the story of Percy Schmeiser, I'll give a brief background although Percy does a great job in his speech we're about to hear, but I feel it's necessary to remind of one important point here – that when we hear about the plight of farmers and the issues facing the farmlands of Canada and around the world, it's easy to look at these issues as being those that exist out there, far away from where we live and conduct our lives and therefore holds little connection to our own concerns. But the only reason you and I have the opportunity to live in a city, and the only reason why the size of cities is constantly increasing, is because of the viability of the surrounding farmland and the viability of farmers. So these issues that farmers face, are as equally important to us as they are to them.

And in the case of Percy Schmeiser and his wife Louise, they had practiced traditional farming for their entire lives, where they saved their seeds from every harvest year to year. Down the road, neighbouring farmers had planted genetically modified canola, and through the natural occurrence of open pollination, the modified canola made its way into the Schmeiser's field and contaminated their crops which were products of decades of seed-saving. The Monsanto Company who owned the patented rights to the modified seeds made their way onto the Schmeiser's land and discovered their crops were a Monsanto product and so they sued the Schmeisers. While thousands of farmers have bowed down to this pressure and settled these issues out of court, the Schmeisers stood up for their farm and in doing so, stood up for every food-consuming Canadian.

Percy has become known across the globe as being the farmer who stood up against one of the most powerful agri-businesses in the world. A musician from Salt Spring Island has even made a song about Percy, and we'll hear that tune later on in the show.

Courtesy of the Necessary Voices Society, here is Percy Schmeiser speaking in June of 2005, on how the patenting of what we eat, has placed human beings under the ownership of corporations.

Percy Schmeiser: Thanks very much for the very kind introduction there. It's great to be back in Vancouver it's almost like a second home. I think I've been in Salt Spring Island and Vancouver Island and here in Vancouver and other parts of British Columbia at least 6 or 8 times in the last year. I always like to come in cherry time then I can always take a load of cherries back home. But what I wanted to talk to you about tonight, I don't want to appear as a fear monger. We had GMO's introduced in western Canada in 1996 and so to us now its no longer a what may happen or could happen but was has happened with the introduction of GMO primarily at that time soybeans and canola.

Maybe I should just go into a brief background of myself. My wife and I were known as seed developers in canola and I took the family farm over from my father in 1947 started growing canola at that time it was known as rapeseed. My wife and I were married in 1952 and she came from a farm background and was involved with plant breeding or natural seed development. So immediately we started to try and develop more varieties of canola suitable for our conditions east of Saskatoon and that region. We had a number of diseases in our canola and in those years where you could not seed canola in the same land except maybe once every four years and by the time we hit the 80's we were able to accomplish rapeseed canola every year in the same land continuously and also on yield and other characteristics. Besides being a seed developer and I should really be saying my wife and I being the seed developer we were also seed savers like hundreds of thousands of farms around the world we used are seeds from year to year. And something that Arran said tonight, I was always concerned on farm issues I was a member of the provincial legislature in Saskatchewan in the 60's and 70's and I was on many agricultural committees both on the provincial level and representing my province of Saskatchewan on the federal level and now always fought and worked for rules that would benefit farmers and I think that that carried through in my stand, my wife and I, my stand against Monsanto when they tried to take the rights of farmers away to always be able to use their seed from year to year.

So that's a brief background. There are so many issues now to the whole GMO issue, genetic modified organisms, there's the property law and intellectual property right of multinationals to human health and another big issue now with the human health is the drug issues with pharma plants being introduced for prescription type drugs are now being produced by plants or from plants and not only in enclosed facilities but in the open. And I'll touch a little later on that. There's the environmental issue and two of the latest most important issues is the terminator technology and also the cheater gene technology and that's a very important issue. So other issues the culture of fear through contracts, extortion letters, Monsanto's gene police are former ex-RCMP, and super

wheat's, mutants that have set in and the complete control of our seed supply now by corporations through patent law.

Now briefly in my lawsuit, Monsanto, which they laid against us in 1998 was a patent infringement lawsuit where they said they I had infringed on their patent by growing Monsanto's GMO Canola without a license. And at that point in time we had never bought Monsanto seed, we hadn't even gone to a Monsanto meeting. So, that came as a real surprise. So we stood up to Monsanto and after a couple years we went to Federal Court of Canada because patent laws come under federal jurisdiction and what that trial judge ruled is what made my case become internationally known and I'll just give you a couple of the highlights number one, he said it does not matter how Monsanto's GMO genes or canola or any GMO plant that they have gets into your crop and he went on to specify how that would happen. Direct seed movement which was a real common way of the seeds to blow into the wind, falling off the tractor trucks, farmers hauling from the combine to the granaries, or seeders and so on or cross pollination. He said it doesn't matter how it gets into your seeds or into your fields and if it happens you'll no longer own your seeds that are planted it all becomes Monsanto's ownership. That judgment is what alarmed people all over the world not only in North America not only other conventional farmers but also organic farmers. How you could now wake up tomorrow morning and no longer be an organic farmer if you have contamination in it.

There's a few other things that he ruled. My wife and I were not allowed to use our seeds or plants again that we had developed over 50 years and he ordered us that any seeds or plants we had left all becomes Monsanto's ownership and we have to deliver them up to Monsanto. Monsanto got 50 years of research and development for nothing. And so another important issue, he ruled that all our profits from 1,030 acres that we had seeded in 1998 goes to Monsanto, all the profit even though from some fields that showed no contamination. Because he said there's a probability there could be some of Monsanto's GMO's in there because we were using our own seed from year to year.

So it went all the way to the Supreme Court after 3 or 4 years and hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of expense but at the Supreme Court level we were able to bring other items in. In the federal court of appeal we couldn't do it because it was only points of law, facts of law, or where the trial judge erred in law. And at the Supreme Court these are some of the items we brought forward:

Number 1: Can living organisms; seeds, plants, genes, human organs be owned and protected by corporate patents on intellectual property?

Number 2: Can genetic modified traits invade and become noxious weeds but then become resistant to weed killers? We now already have that on the prairies and we call them super weeds and I'll touch on that a little later.

And number 3: Can farmers' right to grow conventional organic crops be protected?

Another one can farmers keep the ancient right to keep there own seeds?

And the final one, which became very important to my wife and myself is who owns life? Has any corporation, any individual, the right to patent and own life. And if you can have a right or a patent on a seed or plant a higher life form it carries through in all life forms whether it's a fish, bird, seeds and ultimately a human being. So there's some very very important issues that the government of Canada will eventually have to address.

Now what did the Supreme Court do in their ruling and that ruling came down just a little bit over a year ago. First of all everything that Monsanto came after me like for their license fee, their court costs, damages, and all that they never got one cent. The Supreme Court ruled they don't get one cent because I did not profit by having my yields contaminated with Monsanto GMO's. But what hurt us, and you got to remember Monsanto laid the law suit against me, I didn't lay the lawsuit against them, and the Supreme Court ruled that we both have to pay our costs up to that point in time, all our legal bills. Monsanto's bill probably was around 2 million dollars plus for all their legal expenses against me. My court cost was about 400,000, which I had to pay; it's a lot easier for a multibillion dollar corporation to pay 2 million dollars versus a farmer to pay 400,000. But on the issue to put a patent on a life form this is what the exact ruling was: Monsanto's patent on a gene is valid. And whatever life form the gene enters by whatever means and I mentioned some of the ways it could get there, Monsanto owns and controls that life form it gets into. Now where do you stop now with that decision? As I mentioned seeds, plants, any higher life form, birds, bees, animals, fish and so on and ultimately a human being. Now at that time the press and Monsanto had thought they had a great victory but now it appears it's a very hollow victory because the Supreme Court ruled they own and control it and if you own and control it you now are liable for the liability issue the damage it may do when you release it into the environment and only time will tell what will happen.

My wife now has a lawsuit against Monsanto on the liability issue for contaminating her organic garden it has gone through the courts and we're waiting for the decision at the present time so it's on the liability issue. (applause) You won't believe this but she put a charge against Monsanto because her organic farm was contaminated and they wouldn't come and remove it so she had a university student come in. Total bill for removal was 140 dollars plus 20 dollars cost and she's got Monsanto, multibillion dollar corporation, in court on a 120 dollar bill. The issue is not the 120 dollars, the issue is the liability and if she wins her case... and not only that she's got it in small claims court. So it was pretty embarrassing for Monsanto when they came back and they said they had to check with their chief legal council how they will address because they said it's not a problem they can afford to pay the 140 dollars but its more an important issue to them now on account of the liability. So we're waiting for a decision. And by the way I was her legal council in court.

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On today's program we delve into the controversial inclusion of genetically modified organisms into our food supply, and we are currently hearing a speech given by Saskatchewan farmer Percy Schmeiser from a June 2005 event held in Vancouver.

For those who are perhaps not quite familiar with the Percy Schmeiser story, the tale reads almost like a Hollywood espionage film starring perhaps Pierce Brosnan or maybe Tom Cruise, but instead it involves a Saskatchewan farmer and a multi-national agricultural giant known as Monsanto and their Gene Police.

Percy Schmeiser: I'd like to go into some of the other areas. First of all I mentioned some of the more important issues and some of the other issues but really all important issues. I know that one of the speakers will speak a little bit about the contracts so I went go into that. I don't know if you may have in your presentation about the last item that's in the contracts now and that is you can never take Monsanto to court now. Under new contracts besides the other clauses which you will refer to there's another clause that states for whatever reason a farmer no longer can take Monsanto to court or sue Monsanto for whatever reason. So farmers have their complete right taken away say you can never sue Monsanto for any reason. Now the other issue and ill just go through this quickly, where they advertise to rat or squeal on your neighbour. If you think your neighbours sold GMO canola or soy beans without a license and if you happen to do that you get a free leather jacket from Monsanto, if you rat or squeal on your neighbour. But what happens when Monsanto gets a tip or rumour? They immediately send two of their gene police, we call them gene police and they're former ex-RCMP officers, to a farmer's home. And the first thing they say are we're ex-RCMP and a lot of times the farmers don't hear the ex and think my god what have I done wrong the police are here. And then they'll go on to say we have this tip or rumour you're growing GMO canola without a license and the farmer will say, no I'm an organic farmer, conventional farmer, and they'll say you're lying if you don't confess we'll take you to court and you wont have a farm left. So you can imagine what a farmer or his wife thinks when these gene police leave or Monsanto's own reps leave a farmers home. They'll say is it this farmer or this neighbour or this neighbour over here that's causing me this trouble and now we have this breakdown of a rural social fabric of farmers working together trusting one another.

I often like to tell the story that my grandparents came from Europe around the 1890's. On both sides my mothers side and my fathers side first in the United States and then to Canada in the early 1900's. And believe me my grandparents and my parents had to work together with our neighbours to build our country, our roads, schools our infrastructure and so on and now we have a breakdown of our rural social fabric and that I think, as a former politician, is one of the worst things that could happen to our rural society.

And so but that is some of the things that are rising from those contracts. Just another quick item, we don't know how many hundreds of thousands of these extortion letters have been sent out. Basically it states we think you might be growing Monsanto's GMO canola oil without a license and in lieu of us not taking you to court we estimate you have 200 acres 300 acres whatever, send us 200,000 dollars, 100,000 dollars by a certain time

and we may or may not take you to court. Believe me any farmer that talks about Monsanto I guarantee you they will get a letter like this. Any farmer that testified on my behalf at my trial got a letter like this from Monsanto on land that was not even seeded to canola this means of intimidation, fear, that whole new fear culture. Now is it going on yet? Yes. Here's a letter dated December the 7th and it's one of the most brazen ones I've seen. This one comes right from Monsanto to this farmer accusing him of growing 750 acres and in it it states, "It's in your best interest to settle with Monsanto if you want to consider farming in the future." So you can imagine the fear in the farm family when they get these letters from a multi-billion dollar corporation. Send us a hundred thousand, fifty thousand dollars by a certain day, it's a total corruption! And if you and I tried to do that we'd be thrown in jail but they get away with it.

Now two very important things, number one, which we have found out on the prairies with the introduction in 1996. There is no such thing, and believe me I've farmed almost 60 years now, as containment. You cannot contain a new life form once you release it into the environment. You can't contain pollen flow, you can't contain seed movement whether it's the wind or passing through animals or birds you cannot contain it and it will spread. And when Monsanto used to say all you need is a buffer strip of three metres or so and scientists for Ag Canada would say that they didn't know what they were talking about or if they did it was basically a lie because they were working for Monsanto. So that means that you cannot contain it, you cannot have co-existence and how many times in foreign countries I hear, and in fact Denmark has passed regulations now on the co-existence and I just met with somebody from Denmark last Thursday and I said what are you doing, there is no such thing as co-existence because you cannot contain it you cannot contain pollen flow and wind with seeds blowing in it. So you have no coexistence because that GMO gene is the dominant gene and it will takeover whatever specie seeds or plants it gets into and render that GMO's. We no longer have conventional canola seed left on the prairies it is all contaminated now. Organic farmers no longer can raise canola because it's all contaminated the same thing with soybeans, so choice is gone. And so who has the right? Any individual or any corporation when they decide or a farmer decides to grow GMO's he's taken his choice away from his neighbour whether it's an organic farmer or conventional farmer. And I don't care how good or how bad a GMO may be but no one should have the right to introduce into the environment that takes the rights of other farmers choice away in their crops that they can grow no one should have that right. (applause) So as I said, remember once you introduce a new life form there is no coming back and I know that I will never ever see the removal of GMO canola off the prairies in my lifetime.

Jon Steinman: If you are just tuning in this is Deconstructing Dinner where we are currently hearing a speech given by Saskatchewan farmer Percy Schmeiser who fought a long legal battle with the Monsanto Company, and who continues a secondary battle as we speak.

There are a few minutes left in Percy's speech given in June of 2005 at an event in Vancouver, and I'll note that following this we will be hearing the ballad of Percy Schmeiser – a song created by Salt Spring Island Musician Phil Vernon.

Here's Percy Schmeiser explaining why in 1996, farmers in Saskatchewan chose to begin planting genetically modified crops.

Percy Schmeiser: Basically why did farmers ever start growing GMO's in 1996 when it was introduced? Two things they were told: Number one, a bigger yield; Number two, more nutritious; Number three, less chemicals. And all those other things, like they said we now always have sustainable agriculture. We'll now be able to feed a hungry world, that's what farmers were told. What happened with in two years? First of all super weeds were created because Monsanto was not the only company selling GMO's in 1996, you had the variety to pursue smart liberty and with in the first year you had cross pollination of the three GMO genes in one regular conventional canola plant, making it a new super weed. So now what happened they said less chemicals to the farmers? Farmers are now using three times more chemicals ever than before to try and control this new super weed and these chemicals are more highly powerful and toxic. What about yield? Yield is down in soybeans at least 15%, canola down at least 6.2%, and the quality is about half.

So everything that Monsanto and our government told us has turned out to be exactly the opposite so it really meant increase chemical use and control over farmers that could never use your own seed from year to year. I think those are the main issues I could talk on. My time is up anyway, it has not been easy to fight a multi-billion dollar corporation in court the stress that its put on my wife and my family on my neighbours and if I wouldn't have had the help, moral, and ethical, and financial support from around the world I could not have done it. They watched us day after day they would drive into our yard and sit in our drive way sometimes across the road for three days at a time. They would watch us while we worked in our fields, sit by the road. They never did anything but just the presence of them being there. And their phone calls, "you better watch it they're going to get you." And you know the worst thing they did is that they put a lien, that they couldn't break us down mentally they tried to break us down financially, they put a lien and caveat against all our property even including our house and we couldn't borrow any more money to fight them. And if I were to have lost my case with Monsanto our house would have had a padlock within the hour. So when my wife and I went to Saskatoon to hear the Supreme Court decision at our lawyers' office my wife turned around and she said to me "I hope I have a roof over my head when I come home tonight." That's how they tried to break us down and to destroy us. So the stress part of it and often I wonder or wake up in the middle of the night has it been worth it to put my family through all this stress and hardship and whether we would have anything left from what we worked for all our lives. But again, we always felt that farmers never ever should lose their right to use their own seed from year to year. And then again imposing, my wife and I we have five kids, five children, fifteen grandchildren and we realize after using chemicals for years and year and years that what we were doing to our environment, what we were doing to the health of people. And we felt what kind of a legacy do we want to leave to our five kids and fifteen grandkids? Do we want to leave a legacy of land, food, water and soil full of poisons? I don't think none of us want that. We want to leave a legacy now of land, food, water and soil without poisons and that is why I'm here tonight. There's more than just the issue of GMO foods and GMO pharma

plants, where prescription drugs are now being produced. There's a whole issue of control, freedom of speech, and freedom of expression. Again, thank you for the opportunity to talk to you tonight. (applause)

Ballad of Percy Schmeiser:

*Come gather 'round you people, a story I will tell
Of farmer Percy Schmeiser whom tragedy befell
Now he's standing for all farmers against the corporate greed
He's fighting for the right to save our seed*

Chorus:

*For the rights of all farmers to grow their own seed
To plant for the future safe food that we all need
Percy Schmeiser on him you can depend
To stand up to Monsanto till the end!*

*Farming in Saskatchewan for over fifty years
Seed saver and developer respected by his peers
His non-GE canola was known throughout the west
Disease and pest resistant with the best*

*Then Monsanto's Round-Up Ready turned up in Percy's field
They claimed they were the owner of his yield
They threatened and harassed him with thugs of every sort
And they set out to destroy the man in court*

*Monsanto's lawyers made their case, the trial judge agreed
Under patent law he was no longer the owner of his seed
No matter where it came from he'd have to pay the cost
A lifetime of saving seed was lost*

Chorus

*Monsanto's corporate motto is Hope, Food and Health
But all they really care about is Profit, Power and Wealth
Intimidating farmers till a culture of fear
Rips up the social fabric we hold dear*

*Just like a corporate Goliath, Monsanto swaggers 'round
But Percy Schmeiser is the one to bring the giant down
He's taking the fight back into court, the highest in the land
So that patents on living things are banned*

Chorus

*Now Percy tells his story all around this earth
How genetic engineering will steal a farmer's worth
Small farmers in Africa, in India and France
Know if Percy loses, they don't stand a chance*

*For the rights of all farmers to grow their own seed
To plant for the future safe food that we all need
Percy Schmeiser, we all must defend
And stand up to Monsanto till we win!*

Jon Steinman: And that was the Ballad of Percy Schmeiser – created by Salt Spring Island Musician Phil Vernon.

You can find out more about Percy Schmeiser and his legal battles by visiting www.percyschmeiser.com. And you can also check out a great one hour speech given by Percy Schmeiser on another Kootenay Co-op Radio project, Canadian Voices and you can visit that website at www.canadianvoices.org.

As I mentioned earlier, the fight that Percy is waging against Monsanto is one that if farmer's had the financial opportunity these fights would be waged all across the globe, but farmers tend to not have the necessary means by which to fight a company that pulled in \$347 million dollars in profit in 2004. The battle that Schmeiser is fighting is one that stands up for all Canadians, and you can donate to this fight by visiting the Percy Schmeiser website – www.percyschmeiser.com and you can also, if you don't have access to the internet, send a donation to the following address – The Fight Genetically Altered Food Fund Inc. (and make sure you put in that incorporated) Box 3743, Humboldt, Saskatchewan, Canada S0K 2A0.

soundbite

To take you to the end of today's Deconstructing Dinner broadcast, we will hear another speech given at the June 2005 event that saw the GE-FREE Canada campaign launched. This event was recorded by the Necessary Voices Society, and you can learn more about the society or purchase CDs by visiting www.necessaryvoices.org. You can also check out the Deconstructing Dinner website at www.cjly.net/deconstructingdinner for more info.

This last speech really brings home the ways in which communities can begin showing their support for keeping farmland free of genetically-engineered foods. And this speech is given by Colin Palmer, who is the Chair of the Powell River Regional District. Colin has previously served as the mayor of Powell River, and has also been a city councilor. Powell River is one of the first jurisdictions in Canada who have declared themselves a GE-Free zone where any planting of genetically modified foods is prohibited. Colin raises the issue of how municipalities maintain a role in protecting their regions from genetically engineered plants.

Colin Palmer: Good evening ladies and gentlemen. I really appreciate the invitation by the Council of Canadians. I'm a little bit fearful based on what's going on in Ottawa. I'm a politician and I'm just wondering what you think about me. I might have a microphone under my lapel and I might be recording any conversation that I have with you. Based on what we all know, I tell lies, I cheat, I look for brown envelopes with money in them in restaurants, I'm dumb, I can't give straight answers, and I'm unapproachable and the day I'm unelected I'm totally the opposite, I'm a great guy after that but when you're a politician it's pretty difficult. I'd just like to say that from my experience in local government over thirteen years, if one percent of local elected officials are corrupt I'd be very surprised. Most of them are very very honest good dedicated people and you should appreciate that about them. What's going on in Ottawa is something else.

Why Powell River for a genetically engineered free crop zone? Powell River is isolated its 110 kilometers from here up the coast, not on Vancouver Island. It took me five hours to get here today to travel those 110 kilometers, waiting in parking lots, traveling on ferries, and driving, that's how isolated we are. There are 20,000 people in the region and we're a resource area, we're part of rural British Columbia which has 70% of the resources and 30% of the population. And we have a belief that a diversified stable economy is absolutely essential in such a rural area. And we need to develop the economy and particularly to sustain what already exists. There are some difficulties, we're owned by a number of corporations Brascan is now a new owner of part of the Powell River region, they own a huge tree farm license, they own 16,000 hectares of private land. Norske Canada owns the mill and they own three others on Vancouver Island. Great Pacific Energy owns the power dams in the Powell River region. And BC Ferries authority controls how we move. All those corporations control our lives and one of my jobs is to try to persuade them that they don't. Somewhere in all of this there's a number of small farmers trying to be part of the local economy and one niche they're trying to develop is organic farming and so there's a strong awareness of food quality and a necessity to have a diversity of crops. And they feel threatened by genetic engineering. When you take into the fact that the whole history of food production there are only about twelve crops which have ever been domesticated, that's all throughout the world. And there are only fourteen animals that have ever been domesticated, if you control those you control the world. And that stays in the minds of myself and my board and my community.

So based on Percy's practical expertise the Powell River region can't afford now to have corporations controlling the food supply through genetic engineering. My board believes the declaration of the Powell River region being a genetically free crop zone sends a message. My board has drawn a line in the sand, that's it and that's how we feel at the moment, so that's one of the reasons we wanted the zone. What does that zone mean? People will come to me and say well you can't inform that Colin I mean what are you playing at, you don't have a zone inspector running around, what is it? Well in local government you can have policy statements you can make resolutions and the reason Vancouver city and I think one of the councilors is here tonight. One of the reasons towns and regions make resolutions is it sends a message. So declaring a zone is a policy statement by a local government and it's also there for future boards not just for the

present one because politicians in local government are three year wonders, you're in you're out or you stay a little bit longer depending on what the public think about you. It's also a warning to the seed companies to the genetic engineering companies that we think that If they practice some of their activities in our zone we might do something about it, we might challenge them and say perhaps you are going to be liable for damage, and we the government are responsible for tackling you if you do that. And so they might be a little bit worried that government could sue such a corporation. It's also a way of local government being pro-active how many times have you heard where the public or the newspaper goes to a local politician and says we've got an issue what are you going to do about it? What do they do? We do studies, we hire consultants and we have a study. And then we move at glacial speed to get to a decision. If you declare a zone you've made the decision, you've got action. I, the chair can immediately move if a corporation starts to mess around with genetic engineering and the Powell River Region now.

ending theme

Jon Steinman: That was this week's edition of Deconstructing Dinner, produced and recorded in the studios of Nelson, British Columbia's Kootenay Co-op Radio. I've been your host Jon Steinman. I thank my technical assistant Dianne Matenko.

All of those affiliated with this station are volunteers, and financial support for this station is received through membership, donations and sponsorship from local businesses and organizations. For more information on the station or to become a member, you can visit www.cjly.net, or dial 250-352-9600. And should you have any comments about tonight's show, want to learn more about topics covered, or would like to listen to previous broadcasts, you can visit the website for Deconstructing Dinner at www.cjly.net/deconstructingdinner.

Till next week...
