

**Show Transcript
Deconstructing Dinner
Kootenay Co-op Radio CJLY
Nelson, BC, Canada**

October 30, 2008

GE-Free Zones III – Campaign Launch continued / GE Free Resolution

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Jon Steinman: And welcome to Deconstructing Dinner, a syndicated weekly one hour radio show and Podcast produced at Kootenay Co-op Radio CJLY in Nelson, British Columbia. I'm Jon Steinman and I'll be with you for the next hour.

As promised, today's broadcast will continue where last week's left off with a recording of Saskatchewan farmer Percy Schmeiser speaking on July 10, 2008 in Castlegar British Columbia.

Percy had been invited to help launch the Genetically Engineered or GE Free Kootenays campaign—a campaign that has, since that event, been working towards the creation of a region that can declare itself and remain free of genetically engineered plants and trees.

On October 20, the campaign moved into its *next* phase by requesting from municipal councils in the region to adopt a GE-free resolution. Along with hearing the remainder of Schmeiser's talk, we'll listen in on a short presentation by Andy Morel of the G.E. Free Kootenays campaign, we'll hear the actual October 20th presentation to the city of Nelson, when Kim Charlesworth, also of the GE-Free Kootenays campaign, encouraged the city council to *adopt* the resolution, and rounding off the show, we'll listen in on an *exclusive* interview with Percy and Louise Schmeiser, recorded over breakfast in a Nelson restaurant, the day after his July visit to the area.

Before moving onto the topic for today's broadcast, I will pass along another mention that Deconstructing Dinner does now maintain a group page on Facebook, and the group is slowly growing in numbers, and so we're encouraging everyone who uses Facebook and who listens in on the show to join the group. Perhaps you can share your thoughts on our broadcasts with other listeners from around the world. The page is currently being updated weekly with our audio broadcasts and will soon be home to a weekly Deconstructing Dinner column.

You can access that page by linking to it from our web site at deconstructingdinner.ca

Also on the show's web site is a link to our growing list of transcripts that's worth checking out. Since the spring of this year, a growing list of volunteers have come forward to transcribe our broadcasts and make our content more accessible to a wider

audience. There are now about 17 transcripts on the page with many more in the works, and if you would like to offer your time to the transcription efforts, you can email the show at deconstructingdinner@cjly.net.

Last week's broadcast ended with about 12 minutes left in a recording of Percy Schmeiser speaking to an audience on July 10 2008 in Castlegar. The event was hosted by the Kootenay Food Strategy Society and their GE-Free Kootenays campaign. If you missed that broadcast, it has been archived on our web site under the October 23 2008 broadcast.

Percy Schmeiser is perhaps the most well-known opponent of genetically engineered foods and plants and has, since his long drawn out legal battle with agricultural giant Monsanto, been traveling the world telling his story. In December 2007, Percy and his wife Louise were awarded the Right Livelihood Award for their courage in defending biodiversity and farmers' rights. Since 1998 Percy and Louise have faced an ongoing wave of intimidation from Monsanto, and you'll hear more about their experience in a personal interview later on today's broadcast.

But first let's continue from where Percy left off, here again is Percy Schmeiser speaking on the risks and threats of *pharma*-plants otherwise known as the genetic engineering of plants to produce pharmaceutical drugs.

Percy Schmeiser: I think I have enough time; I'll go briefly into the food issue. First of all, many of you know about the pharma-plants. There are six major drugs being produced by plants at the present time. There could be a lot more coming in the future and I think there are. And this is being done in the open and in the wild. And I think it was absolutely criminal that both the Canadian and American governments allowed this to happen. Some of the major drugs are, and I'll give you some of them: industrial enzymes, crop producing vaccines, blood thinners, blood clotters, growth hormones and contraceptives. These are some of the main ones. I was at a meeting in California about a little over a month ago and a doctor was giving a presentation. And he gave some examples of what these pharma-plants are doing. It's bad enough to eat food with GMOs in because you have new viruses and new bacteria and in case of canola with antibiotic resistant marker genes in. So it's bad enough to eat foods with those in but now you could be eating a food with those pharma or prescription drugs in. Some examples he gave at the meeting: he said if a woman is pregnant and then she goes home or eats food with a contraceptive drug in, what will the results be? Another example he gave: if a person has had surgery, and then you eat a food with a blood thinner in, what will the results be? So, those are the pharma-plants and as I said, I think it is absolutely criminal that both our governments allowed this to happen, in the open, and it is cross pollinating now into different crops as I mentioned before how this can happen. So that's one thing in regards to what you are eating. The other important thing is the terminator gene that was also mentioned before. For those of you who don't really understand or know what the terminator gene is, it's a gene that's put into a seed, the seed becomes a plant, and all seeds from that plant are sterile which you cannot use in future planting. The danger of the terminator gene is it can destroy basically your indigenous crop, if your neighbor is an

organic grower, it can destroy the fertility or the germination of his crop also through cross pollination. So to me, the terminator gene, and not only that, it can be put into any higher life form, and remember what I said, a higher life form is basically anything that comes from a seed. So what about a bird, bee, animal, fish, even a human being if somehow the terminator gets into us as a human being? Does that say they own you? Does that say they own me? So, I mentioned before, we now have more problems than we have answers for. And I think to me it's the greatest assault we've ever seen on the face of this planet when a company comes out with a gene that terminates life! These companies call themselves "life science." It's nothing about life science, it's all about "death science." Imagine a gene that terminates life. Now, if that is not bad enough, there is another new gene out—fully developed, waiting to get regulatory approval, it would work in conjunction with the terminator gene and we call it on the prairies "the cheater gene." And this is how it works. Cheater gene, terminator gene, put into a seed. The seed becomes a plant. But the plant with the terminator gene in will not produce a seed unless you spray a chemical on. Then when you spray the chemical on, then the plant produces the seed and the terminator gene kicks in making the seed sterile. That will give them total, total control of the seed supply if regulatory approval was ever, ever given. So again, a total control of the seed supply. And that's what GMOs have meant to the companies, to get total control of the seed supply and massive increased use of chemicals.

There are many, many other issues that arise. First of all, I think it's a real human rights issue. We in Canada do not have labeling and I was very disappointed when not long ago, a few months ago when the members of Parliament voted against labeling. Europe, the European Union have labeling. Many countries of the world have labeling. So people know what they are eating. So we have to, and to me it's a drastic violation of human rights when we don't know what's in our food. I should have the right to know what I'm eating, what my wife is eating, what my kids are eating, what my grandchildren and great-grandchildren are eating. And we don't have that right in Canada. To me it's a drastic violation of human rights.

What did my wife and I do about this issue? Two years ago, we took Canada to the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva. And Canada has been charged now with a number of issues. One first of all, the violation of human rights in regards to we don't know what's in our food. Another one with the academic issue where many of our scientists and research people, professors at our Universities, the funding now is coming from the private sectors like the corporations like Monsanto and not from the public sector and these academic people, don't have the right to release the information as scientists should do to the general public. So it's a basic violation of academic freedom. There's many other issues that we brought before the United Nations in Geneva on the violations by Canada on human rights. We've tried to bring this issue as far as we could as a couple. And it has not been easy to do this.

Monsanto did everything in their power to destroy us. They tried, I'll give you an example, they would watch us when we worked in our fields. They would sit on the road all day long, watch what we were doing in our fields. They would come into our driveway and for hours and hours they would sit in our driveway, watch what my wife

was doing. They didn't do anything, but just to intimidate and to harass us and put fear into us. And one time my wife and I were in Cape Town at Parliament in South Africa, speaking there at the Assembly, and coming out of the Assembly, we ran face to face with one of Monsanto's representatives and he shook his fist in my wife's face and my face and said "Nobody, nobody stands up to Monsanto. We're going to get you and we're going to destroy you somehow, someday." So you can imagine the fear that they tried to put into us. They went to our neighbors and said "If you stand up and support Percy and Louise Schmeiser, we're going to come after you and we're going to do to you the same as we did to them. And you won't have a farm left." So those are some of the things that they did to us. Not only that but when they heard how we were financing our legal bills, we were taking mortgages out on our farm and so on, then they tried to seize our land, our house, all our farm equipment. They put liens and caveats, they tried to seize our bank accounts, everything! And we had to fight them every inch of the way. The seven years when this all happened, it was like a living hell. And we don't wish this on anyone. But this is what happens to people with the introduction of GMOs, a total control and loss of human rights, but especially freedom of speech.

Why did Louise and I stand up to Monsanto in 1998? There was another reason. We mentioned we were seed developers. We realized that if true cross pollination or direct seed movement—with the introduction of GMOs, if you ever get down to one seed, one variety of seeds or plants, and you have some disaster, like a blight, or any other disaster, you've got nothing to fall back on if it's all GMOs. And so we were very concerned about that. Another concern we were worried about was that we were developing seeds and plants to suit our region around east of Saskatoon and it done well in that region but maybe a hundred miles away or across the border in Montana, or in Alberta, it may not have done as well because climatic and soil conditions are different. And we realized this, as seed developers that one glove does not fit all. And if you ever go to the GMO way, you'll only have one variety of seeds or plants, in whatever variety that you hold to, and you don't have a choice. So that's another thing, why we stood up to Monsanto.

I think, looking back, my wife and I have five children, we have fifteen grandchildren and a great-grandchild. And I think we realized what kind of a future, what kind of a legacy do we want to leave to our children and grandchildren and so on. And I think none of us want to leave a legacy of land and air and soil and water full of poisons. We wanted to leave a legacy of land and food and air and water without poisons. And I think all of us here tonight want to leave that same type of legacy, but we have to do something now. And I said, once you introduce it, it's over, and it's over. And we don't know, as I said before, if it ever can be recalled back. So, that's the kind of a legacy my wife and I want to leave for the future, but we have to do something now.

There is many other issues I would like to talk on but my wife is, I should also say, I don't, I mentioned before, I could never have done this without her help. And many times when I have gone for long periods of time, traveling around the world, bringing this awareness, I would come home, and I would wake up in the middle of the night and I would think, "My God, what am I doing to my wife and my family, our friends?" And my wife would always be there and said "Percy, don't give up, we must stand up for the

rights of farmers always to use your own seed.” And, not only that, but my wife has a very deep faith and I have to really give her credit for that. And many times when I’d come home, she would say “Percy, I believe that many times at night I prayed more than what I slept.” So, without her I could not have done it. So, also then, we don’t know, my wife and I don’t know how many good years we got left. She’s 76, I’m 77. But we gave a commitment back in 1998 that as long as we got life within us, we’re going to go down fighting for the rights of farmers and people, all over the world, always to use their own seed. Thank you and God bless.

JS: Saskatchewan farmer Percy Schmeiser speaking on July 10, 2008 in Castlegar British Columbia. This is Deconstructing Dinner.

Following Percy’s talk, Andy Morel of the GE Free Kootenays campaign took to the stage to share *with* the audience how the Kootenay region of BC can work towards becoming a GE free zone.

Andy Morel: Good evening folks. I apologize for the canned presentation but there’s a lot of information and wanted to make sure I had it all tonight. GE Free Kootenays has been born out of the province-wide efforts of GE Free BC which started six years ago. 2006 saw a coming together of campaigners from across BC and the Yukon for the first coordinated strategy session on genetically engineered food in the province. Society status was received in 2007. The groups and individuals comprised of social justice and food activists had collaborative goals: organizing resistance to GE crops and food. To that end the society has been active in lobbying politicians and decision makers, has held numerous public events including showing “The Future of Food” documentary, and has supported Percy in his court cases against Monsanto. Efforts have also included working on a ban on terminator seed technology, and BC mandatory food labeling campaigns. GE Free BC is governed by a steering committee which currently includes fourteen members from across BC and the Yukon, including Vancouver’s Nigel Tunnacliffe who is here this evening. GE Free BC envisions a food sovereign Canada where no genetically engineered life forms are created, patented, approved, bought, sold or traded. Where Canada is a leader in safe and sustainable agriculture and it is known as a GE free nation. Where Canada actively secures international agreements to preserve regional biodiversity and promote food sovereignty. Where community based farmers have the right and ability to farm and save seed from year to year. This vision is aimed to protect the health and sustainability of communities, animals, and ecosystems. Public education has been an important strategy of GE Free BC through dialoging with farmers, providing information on viable alternatives to growing GE crops, and lobbying politicians and decision makers to designate their jurisdictions GE free. The efforts of GE-Free BC are currently paying off. Lobbying efforts world wide and locally in declaring GE free zones have been passed in 30 countries, 230 regions in Europe, 83 towns in Vermont and BC communities of Powell River and the southern Gulf Islands. Although a GE free zone and these resolutions are non-binding, a clear message is being sent: “We don’t want GE crops being grown in our area.”

To support the designation of a GE free zone in the Kootenays, a sub-group was established in the fall of 2007. Again, a number of area politicians of all levels of government along with farmers, social justice and food activists have come together in a preventative campaign to organize and assert their concern for the genetic manipulation of our food supply and the promotion of locally grown food products. It has become almost unavoidable to not eat foods that support destruction of biodiversity, the concern over safety of engineered seed, chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and the growth and domination of large corporate food interests. With global warming concerns, the loss of biodiversity in food production through agribusiness is a huge threat, and putting our faith in monocultures—that is the wide spread growing of one or only a handful of crops does not guarantee the security of food supplies. Lobbying efforts requiring the mandatory labeling of GE ingredients in the food shelves, as Percy shared with us tonight has been strong, both provincially and nationally but thus far have not been successful. Incredible pressure is being exerted on governments to accept the science, the technology, and the associated marketed products by the biotech businesses. Once GE contamination occurs, it is too late and we are all well aware of the manipulation that is being promoted on plants and animals by these corporations.

The development of GE Free Kootenays is another local initiative to counter and lobby against that control. Along with the promotion of non GE agriculture, we are committed to assist with the development of a diverse, independent, sustainable, local food industry promoting food security in a viable local economy. Alternatives are available, growing daily and promoted to us. We are very blessed here in the Kootenays. The designation of organic farms and farming methods, the proliferation of market gardens, farm gate sales, local retail outlets that are selling locally grown food, are proof that we have the control available to us. We can assert ourselves with our purchasing habits.

As an ideal example, development of local grain CSA (community supported agriculture); a farmer friendly program developed by the West Kootenay EcoSociety, Wildsight, and Creston Food Action Coalition. By purchasing shares in advance, we can support the local farmers in guaranteeing their income in the production of locally grown grain products. This year, its first, 200 shares have been sold locally to support the growing of grain, subsidize the income of three local farmers in Creston and help feed hundreds of local residents. Expansion of this program is being planned for next year. This grain project is an important initiative as part of the GE Free Kootenays campaign as it allows for this campaign to not just say to farmers “Don’t grow GE crops” but also presents an alternative to farmers that says “Instead of growing GE crops, why not grow grain for local consumption?” and in doing so, this community is prepared to pay you more than you are currently receiving for the crops you are now growing.

Another important farmer friendly development just recently announced as a result of Percy’s current tour to BC, is NDPMP’s Gene Crowder and Katherine Bell, both of Vancouver Island. They are planning to introduce a private member’s bills on farmer’s rights, another sign that farmers are not only being recognized but finally respected for their contribution to society’s general well being through their efforts.

So what else can all of us do to support and secure our food supply and local economy? Here's a few items that I can highly recommend.

- Buy locally grown food products. Support our farmers.
- Buy non GE foods and I realize that can be a challenge in the fact that we don't have labeling so keep pushing to have labeling.
- Stay informed, sign up for email updates from GE Free Kootenays or stay posted to the Kootenay food strategy society web site at kootenayfood.ca. We should be able to remember that one. And I also want to say in regards to kootenayfood.ca I found out tonight that the website is now up as of just a week ago. It's a work in progress. It's extremely interactive and it's an excellent resource in our ability to be able to access information about food activists, about food issues all around the Kootenays so I would really encourage everybody to check that site out and it's going to be expanded and developed and you're going to be able to participate in it in a big way. So, please keep that in mind.
- Join GE Free BC. Sign up on their web site. Pick up information at the table tonight. We do have information back here.
- Watch for information on the expanded grain CSA this winter and purchase a share in this unique local opportunity.
- And consider supporting the GE Free Kootenays campaign on your way out this evening with a further donation to our efforts.

Thank you folks, for coming tonight.

JS: Andy Morel of the GE Free Kootenays campaign speaking on July 10, 2008 in Castlegar British Columbia. This is Deconstructing Dinner and part III of a series that has been tracking the evolution of a campaign that is working towards the creation of a region that can declare itself free of genetically-engineered plants and trees. Deconstructing Dinner has been documenting the evolution of this campaign in order to provide a resource to other communities who share the same concerns as those in the Kootenay region of British Columbia.

Now one of the advantages of holding a campaign launch event with someone as well-known as Percy Schmeiser was the amount of media coverage that the event and campaign received in regional media. Every single print publication throughout the region covered the event, with some publications giving it front page coverage. Even almost all radio stations within the region covered the event as well. The Deconstructing Dinner web site will be hosting resources on this campaign which will include links to the media coverage that the campaign has received and continues to receive today. Again all of that will be posted on our web site at deconstructingdinner.ca.

Now between the campaign launch in July and the airing of *this* broadcast, GE Free Kootenays hosted a public meeting in August to share *with* residents the resolution that would later be presented to municipal councils and regional boards. A copy of this resolution will also be made available on our web site.

Fast forwarding to today and the first airing of this broadcast on October 30th, it was only ten days ago on October 20th, that GE Free Kootenays presented this resolution to the cities of Nelson and Castlegar and requested from their municipal councils that they adopt the resolution. Nelson and Castlegar represent only two of over a dozen municipal councils and regional boards within the area that will too have the resolution presented to them.

Deconstructing Dinner recorded the October 20th presentation to the City of Nelson, and here's campaign spokesperson Kim Charlesworth.

Kim Charlesworth: We're here to present a resolution that we would like this council to pass to show support for and be part of a regional initiative to create a GE, which is genetically engineered free zone in the Kootenays.

This presentation is an extension of information that was already presented to council by Jon from Community Food Matters on food security earlier this year and also work done by the West Kootenay EcoSociety on the grain CSA or community shared agriculture project which has wide support and huge success in delivering locally grown organic grain to Nelson businesses and residents.

As you can see from the information that was included in your package, this issue has been widely covered in the media and is widely supported. It's clearly an issue that *is* within the mandate of council. In your package is a copy of the resolution and the first two whereas clauses of the resolution point out that the community charter grants councils under section 8-3 which deal with fundamental powers; the ability by law to regulate, prohibit, and impose requirements in relation to the health, safety and protection of persons or property and the protection and enhancement of the well being of its community, public health and protection of the natural environment. As well, Nelson's official community plan states as a goal in Section 16.2: to maintain and enhance Nelson's environmental quality and to safeguard it for future generations; to ensure Nelson's economic stability and well-being by promoting environmentally sustainable economic development; to act locally towards the solution of regional, national and global environmental problems.

And there is no doubt that food security *is* an economic issue. So what we're going to do with this presentation is give a *little* bit of history of the campaign, ask and explain *why* GE free, why would anyone care, why would we want this, and a short comment on each of the clauses of the resolution, to explain the importance of each of them.

So the campaign began a year ago, November 2007, and it was the first meeting with a goal to create a region here in the Kootenays that would remain free of genetically engineered plants and trees. The meeting was hosted by Community Food Matters and attended by organic farmers, environmental and food security advocates, and politicians from all levels of government. The campaign was sparked in part by similar campaigns under way in the Yukon, the lower mainland, and on Vancouver Island, and soon to be in the Okanagan. So the GE Free Kootenays campaign is part of a larger province wide

initiative. The first region in Canada to pass such a resolution was Powell River, followed by the Southern Gulf Islands in BC. The first in North America was Mendocino County in California. And 83 municipalities in Vermont have passed GE free resolutions. In Europe, where the population is far more conscious, there are thousands of municipalities that have created GE free zones. We intend for the Kootenays to become Canada's third GE free zone. Tonight we will be presenting the same resolution to city council in Castlegar and the plan is to present to municipalities throughout the Kootenays over the next year.

The most famous opponent of genetically engineered food world-wide is Saskatchewan farmer Percy Schmeiser. Therefore, we publicly launched the campaign on July of this year by bringing Percy to speak to the public. We received wide, regional media coverage in both print and radio media. Global attention is now being paid to this campaign because of its exposure on the internationally syndicated "Deconstructing Dinner." I just want to make sure that nobody confuses this with the idea of banning processed foods that contain GE from grocery stores. That's not something that is in the purview of a city council. It is being addressed through legislation. Our own MP Alex Atamanenko had introduced a private members bill in Ottawa regarding mandatory labeling. Over eighty percent of Canadians have indicated that they want mandatory labeling. So we're happy to see that our federal politicians are addressing that issue. This issue today is one that is within the purview of a council. And it's addressing a much more local issue. We all know the increasing importance of insuring a stable and abundant local food supply, and we see this as a first and vital step to insure that our own region remains free of these plants and trees and their known and unknown health and environmental risks along with the protection of farmer's rights and the food sovereignty of our region.

So, why do we care? Well, that relates to why a company would genetically engineer a plant in the first place. Corporate gain? They design a plant to be resistant to a herbicide developed by the same company who develops the seed. Simply put, a farmer signs a contract with the company to purchase the seed and in order for the seed to be effective, they also have to purchase the chemical produced by the company to be used specifically for that crop. They are no longer allowed to save seed and are restricted to the varieties that the company sells. It's this intensive use of off-farm inputs that has driven the cost of farming so high that farming can become such a difficult business to be in today.

I'm going to go in when we do each clause, we are also going to do health risks, the inability to prevent cross contamination and the fact that it locks farmers into reducing biodiversity and prevents them from saving seed.

JS: And this is Deconstructing Dinner, a syndicated weekly one-hour radio show and Podcast produced at Kootenay Co-op Radio CJLY in Nelson, British Columbia. I'm Jon Steinman and you're listening to Kim Charlesworth of the Genetically-Engineered (or GE) Free Kootenays campaign. Kim was recorded on October 20, 2008, presenting to the councilors and Mayor of the City of Nelson. GE-Free Kootenays is calling upon local governments in the region to adopt a resolution that would send a strong message both

within and outside the region that genetically engineered plants and trees are not welcome within the area.

And here again is Kim Charlesworth.

KC: Now, we know that there is little or no agricultural land in the city of Nelson. But the passing of resolutions such as this, send an important message that can also help spread outwards to the outlying rural areas. In addition, it's realistic to expect that GE plants and trees may soon be widely accessible to the home gardener. Even now, home gardeners back yard plots *do* risk cross contamination from crops such as corn which are grown in the region. Also GE wheat varieties have been developed but are not yet commercialized. And, with the grain CSA growing organic wheat in Creston for local consumption, it's not something we want to jeopardize. So you can follow along with the resolution in your package.

I've already explained the first two whereas statements as setting out the authority of council to deal with this issue. The third and fourth clauses deal with peer reviews and health.

Whereas genetically engineered foods have not been adequately tested by any federal agency for long term impacts on human and environmental issues, and whereas the federal government has yet to fully implement all of the recommendations issued by the Royal Society of Canada for the proper regulation of GE foods to prevent harm. For those of you not familiar with the Royal Society of Canada, they are the senior national body of distinguished Canadian scientists consisting of approximately 800 fellows. They are selected by their peers for outstanding contributions to the natural and social sciences and they provide expert advice notably to government on issues of public interest. In 2001, Health Canada, the Canadian food inspection agency and Environment Canada asked the Society to provide expert advice on how to regulate GE foods. One of the final reports key recommendations is the implementation of an independent process for auditing of the scientific and ethical aspects of regulatory decision making. This recommendation has never been implemented. Chapter 9 of the final report also cautioned Canadians about the conflict of interest within regulatory agencies like the CFIA who possess both the mandate to promote the development of agricultural biotechnology and to regulate it.

Of relevant interest to the next paragraph of our resolution is section 5.7 of the Royal Society's report which sets out another key recommendation. That a national research program be established to monitor the long term effects of GM organisms on the environment, human health and animal health and welfare. This key recommendation has also not been heeded. Many of the key recommendations of the Royal Society's report have not been heeded or implemented.

So the sixth clause deals with cross contamination. Whereas it is currently not possible to prevent genetically engineered seeds and pollen flow from contaminating non GE conventional and organic plants and trees and wild plants. It's a natural occurrence for one plant to cross with another plant and pass along its genetic makeup. Seed

contamination where seeds blow from one field to the next, is also another very natural form of cross contamination, can occur through wind drift, insects, birds and some human activities. While there are means to limit such contamination there is absolutely no way to control it. And the contamination of non GE conventional and organic crops with genetically engineered DNA and seeds is common place around the world. Canola in Canada is the best example. It's the second most widely planted crop in the country yet 96% of all canola grown are three varieties. Three—that's not very much biodiversity. Any canola farmer wishing to grow organic canola has no way of keeping their crop free of contamination. It's critical to insure their crop can be certified, as certified organic, to have no GE in it. This has been the demise for organic canola in Canada because today most organic canola growers have given up trying to grow the crop. There is a lot of fear that that same cross contamination that killed the organic canola sector will hit other sectors as well. And wheat is the best example of that threat. As I mentioned earlier, we are now planting organic wheat in Creston for consumption through the grain CSA through businesses and residents in Nelson. Once these crops are introduced into the environment, you cannot call them back. In the case of canola, seed can lay dormant in the earth for up to ten years before germinating.

The next clause deals with farmer's rights.

Male City Councilor: Kim, sorry.

KC: Yep! Too long?

Male City Councilor: No, it's not too long but it sounds like it's getting about on the long side.

Female City Councilor: So, can we...

KC: Yep, I will wrap it up. Ok. So, and this is actually probably the most important piece of this is how it affects farmer's rights. They seed save. For millennia they have saved seed. But when you get into growing GE crops, they have to sign restrictive covenants to prevent them from saving seed and they are forced to purchase each year. Farmers whose fields have been contaminated with GE varieties also face legal challenges or threats from the companies who own the patents. Those companies can come onto your land, check to see if there is any GE there, and if there is, they can sue you. This also ties in to the community's ability to be in full control of what's being grown in the area without any external influence.

Food security, as I mentioned is an economic issue. And it's one of the premises of food serenity which leads to the last clause. The prohibition of genetically engineered plants and trees would insure the integrity of conventional and organic plants and trees and give local producers access to a developing non GE market.

The last clause takes us back to where we started: the role of government. It has long been under the jurisdiction of provincial and federal bodies but we've seen here in the

Kootenays how the other levels of government are with independent power projects, they are removing some of the local say in approving of those local projects.

So the last clause, whereas the regulation of genetically engineered plants and trees *is* a municipal and or regional affair and in the public interest. Therefore be it resolved, that the city of Nelson hereby opposed the cultivation of genetically engineered plants and trees in the municipality of the city of Nelson. That is what we are asking this council to pass.

JS: Kim Charlesworth speaking to the City of Nelson on October 20, 2008. Kim is a spokesperson for the Genetically-Engineered (or GE) free Kootenays campaign.

An actual copy of the proposed resolution is available on the Deconstructing Dinner web site at deconstructingdinner.ca under the show dated October 30, 2008.

Now the meeting at which Kim Charlesworth presented the resolution was not a meeting where the Council makes decisions, and without much time for questions following the presentation, Councilor Gord McAdams came out strongly in favor of the resolution and he made a motion to table the issue to the Council's next meeting on November 3. Gord McAdams is currently running for the position of Mayor leading up to the November 15th municipal elections.

On that same day, the resolution was *also* presented to the City of Castlegar, about a 35 minute drive south of Nelson. The presentation was met positively by the majority of councilors there, however there was some confusion as to the role of a resolution versus a bylaw. One councilor in particular was concerned at how a GE Free zone would be enforced, and Kim Charlesworth stressed that the campaign is *not* seeking the enactment of a bylaw, but instead the passing of a resolution that declares a position of opposition to the cultivation of genetically-engineered plants and trees. No, with not enough time to answer *all* of the councilors concerns, the issue was tabled for further discussion at a future meeting.

So, as of today, there are no *new* GE-free zones in Canada, however, depending on the outcome of the November 3rd meeting in Nelson, perhaps, by next week's show, we'll be able to make such an announcement. So you can stay tuned for that.

Now in bringing us to the end of today's broadcast we can come back to Farmer Percy Schmeiser who is becoming quite the familiar voice here on the show. Shortly after the July 10th event in Castlegar, I had the opportunity to spend more *personal* time with Percy and his wife Louise, including, an interview over breakfast in Nelson shortly before they embarked eastward on their way back to Saskatchewan.

While it's well known among those who have followed Percy and Louise's story since 1998 that Monsanto had engaged in quite the heavy-handed tactics of intimidation and legal challenges, there has not been much discussion surrounding the personal *well-being* of an older farming couple exposed to such fear. As our breakfast began, I asked Percy

and Louise about this, and learned that even Canada's young and *future* farmers are also receiving that same intimidation.

JS: People were concerned for your well-being throughout the course of this case. You know this was a long and drawn out case and it was certainly also a very heated case in the sense that this was a large company that was up against a very small and in the early stages, someone who was very unknown. And people were concerned for your well-being, and was that a valid concern?

PS: It was really a valid concern, especially at the beginning and the threats that we had received from Monsanto. Well, we believe it was from Monsanto, like phone calls especially to my wife: "You'd better watch it, we're going to get you." And then when they would send the representatives of Monsanto, or Monsanto's "gene police" as we called them, would sit on our driveway, watch what we were doing all day long and then watch us when we worked in our fields. They would sit on the road alongside our fields all day long and watch, for days at a time. And so there was a lot of intimidation and I guess to break us down mentally at the beginning. And then also they would go to our neighbors and threaten our neighbors that if they would support us, or help us, they would come after our neighbors also. So, it was not only our own family, it was everybody, not everybody but people that associated with us, especially our farmer friends.

JS: You had one neighbor in particular who I guess has helped you out before who they recognized, and I think he testified in your case. They recognized him as being someone as well who was supporting you, and it sounds like they also then started intimidating him. Was that the case?

PS: Exactly, and it was a younger person, about 25, 26 years of age and he was really concerned, he thought he was going to lose his farm and that they would come after him. I remember one day, he come rushing over to our place. He said "Could you please come quickly with a camera?" He said "Monsanto's gene police, or Monsanto's reps are in this field" and so I did do that. I rushed out and I was able to get a picture of Monsanto, one of Monsanto's reps and it was a former RCMP officer in his field, and I took a picture of him. And I said "You are trespassing, you better get out." Which the farmer had also told this rep, and he said to the farmer "Make us, make us get out of your field." And he had said "Well, we'll take you to court" and so on and...

Louise Schmeiser: And then he got an extortion letter.

PS: Well, extortion letter also. So after Monsanto's people left his field I did take him to the local RCMP detachment and the RCMP said "Well, you have to lay a charge." But they'll let you know that if you laid a charge they're going to fight you and it probably will cost you a lot of money for lawyers and so on. So he just dropped it and he let it go. But that is how they intimidate and harass people and they say there's only a few farmers but there's thousands of farmers that they have intimidated and investigated.

JS: So you were, as you say, the first test case and now as you were also saying, you receive a lot of these phone calls from people who are now in this position and what has happened to you, is it really now happening, as you say to all of these other farmers?

PS: To many, many farmers, in fact not even a month ago, I had a call from a farmer as far away as Ontario, who they've come after and for a very large amount. And he basically never bought their seed but contaminated, used his seed and now they want his total crop. I also just received a letter from a lawyer in the US, I think it was Missouri, has a farmer that came in that's been prosecuted by Monsanto and was wondering what we had done or what the law said here under patent law here in Canada. So, it's still going on and especially now, when you hit the growing season of canola in western Canada where the flower—canola, is now blooming, and that's when they really start to investigate farmers. Any farmer that has *ever* signed a contract with Monsanto, you can expect a visit almost every year. And especially if you stop growing and stop buying Monsanto seed, they'll come out to the farm and see—why aren't you buying their seed, what is the reason, and if you are growing somebody else's, some other company's canola, they'll wonder why and you can almost expect a charge from them that you, that they know that you are contaminated. Once you grow it, there's contamination in your field.

JS: Louise, can I ask you, what was the intimidation like from your perspective—was there ever a point where you wanted to just say, ok, let's stop this case altogether?

LS: Not only that, when they would sit and watch me, every move out of the house, know how I felt? I was a prisoner in my own home. You know. Many times. I think if it wouldn't have been that I had faith and I prayed, that was the only thing that gave me strength to put up with it. Many times I wished I was like a gopher and could hide in a hole. That's the way I felt, and nobody could see me.

JS: And how long did that last? Was that for years?

LS: Some days were better than others. You know how it is, you have your ups and your downs. We always had to watch that we didn't both get down at the same time. And there was really trouble, but there was times we had to cheer each other up. Percy always said one thing to me: "There's going to be life after Monsanto." So that was something to look forward to.

JS: So Percy, both of you have now been traveling around BC as part of this genetically engineered free BC tour. What are your thoughts on a campaign here in BC that is looking to create regions that are free of genetically engineered crops?

PS: I think it is just great! That there is so much interest. I've seen so much interest in the area, like on Vancouver Island, Vancouver, Victoria, and also now here in Nelson and Castlegar. There is so much interest and I think now you not only have farmers that are concerned but especially consumers that are concerned, human rights people,

environmental people, people concerned about human health. So it's really a large part of the population that people are concerned about.

JS: Now as a contrast, you were both just traveling in Europe visiting areas that are already genetically engineered free, some of which want to be genetically engineered free, and here in North America it is still a very young movement and an idea there are some places like Vermont that have many of these zones but in BC this is new. There is one case in Powell River that is now genetically engineered free as well as the Southern Gulf Islands. What's this contrast? Can you compare what you saw in Europe to here?

PS: Well, in some ways we are ahead here, and in some ways they are ahead there. In the issue of safety of food and good food the Europeans are way ahead of us. But with the introduction of GMOs which we've had twelve years ago, it first being tried to be introduced there. And so things that the Europeans are being told now, it is the same things that we were told twelve years ago here. Europeans also have labeling so they know what's in their food. That's where we're really behind here in North America and we should have that labeling of food and I think once people know what's in their food, there's going to be a movement more against GMOs. Not only that if people don't buy food that has GMOs in it, people that produce it and companies that sell it, won't sell it because there is no market for it.

JS: And this is Deconstructing Dinner where you are listening to an interview with Percy and Louise Schmeiser of Bruno Saskatchewan. Percy and Louise were in Nelson British Columbia in July of this year when this interview was recorded.

Now I do have two more clips here from that interview, and with not enough time to get into detail, I will briefly share with you an update on what the current European situation is with respect to Genetically engineered foods.

While Europe has long maintained a heavy resistance to GE or GMOs (especially on the grassroots level), an October 26 article published in the Independent (one of the UK's leading newspapers) shared some startling information with its readers. According to the article authored by Geoffrey Lean, a document was obtained by the Independent that outlined the minutes from a series of meetings attended by representatives of 27 governments. The minutes disclose plans to "speed up" the introduction of genetically modified crops and foods and to "deal with" public resistance to them. To date, there are *no* genetically engineered crops being grown in Britain.

A link to this article will be made available on the Deconstructing Dinner web site under the October 30 broadcast.

Now in an area that may have vast amounts of agricultural land like the Canadian prairies or American Midwest, one of the arguments that may arise when *proposing* a Genetically-engineered free zone is that the risks of GE should not be of a concern to small-scale farmers. In my interview with Percy Schmeiser, I did ask him whether such a concern is valid.

PS: Well, I really don't think there is much difference if it's a larger holding of land or parcel of land or a small parcel of land which you would have here in BC. I think that the whole issue of the corporations especially like Monsanto is to get total control of all the seed supply. And I think that's why there should be such concern especially in smaller holdings or smaller parcels of land, it can contaminate that much faster because if it can contaminate in not too long a time on a large parcels of land, look how quickly it can contaminate on very small parcels of land. So I think that the concern here where you have these smaller acreages, especially organic farmers, how they could wake up tomorrow morning and no longer be certified as organic because of direct seed movement or pollen flow or whatever. So I think there should be a very large concern by people that once somebody introduces it, it would be very difficult for it not to spread.

JS: Now one of the most glaring examples that reemphasizes Percy's suggestion that the size of farms does *not* matter with respect to the issue of genetic engineering can be found in the outcome of the media coverage that the GE-Free Kootenays campaign received especially back in July. One article in particular that appeared on the front page of the Nelson Daily News on July 21st was titled "New Move to Cleanse Region of GE crops" – authored by Timothy Schafer. As was discovered, that article *and* the campaign presented quite the concern to CropLife Canada – the national trade association representing the agriculture biotechnology industry (which includes members such as Monsanto, Bayer, DuPont and Syngenta) all of whom are developers of genetically engineered seeds and chemical farm inputs. In the August 5th issue of the Nelson Daily News, CropLife Canada's President Lorne Hepworth authored a letter to the editor and the letter was titled "Defending Biotechnology". In it Hepworth attacks the "unquestioning one-sided nature of the article." He continues, "Readers of the daily news deserve balance when it comes to the important subject of plant biotechnology and this article did nothing to provide them with that." So clearly, the biotechnology industry is indeed paying attention to small-town newspapers in regions with small-scale agriculture.

Now Lorne Hepworth's arguments were almost a carbon copy of some of those raised by Juan Enriquez in our recently rebroadcasted episode titled Biotechnology Myths. And as a result, the GE-Free Kootenays campaign submitted a long response *to* Hepworth's article, which was published in the August 8 issue of the paper.

Links to all of these articles will also be made available on the Deconstructing Dinner web site at deconstructingdinner.ca and posted under the October 30th broadcast.

You can also stay posted to the GE Free Kootenays on-line group page which can be found by visiting the Kootenay Food Strategy web site at kootenayfood.ca. Updates on the campaign will be posted there.

And in closing out today's show, I'll leave you with one last segment from my interview with Percy Schmeiser.

JS: At the event last night in Castlegar there weren't really any politicians, at least that we could recognize, municipal politicians who would be involved in any genetically engineered free Kootenays region, and as you were describing in your trip to Europe, there was incredible welcomes from mayors of towns and politicians and there's a real interest from a political level in your case and in your story and in the work that you are doing. Why do you think there is such a contrast between that?

PS: I think, again going back to the food issue, the safety of food, that's where a big difference is in Europe. It's not only politicians on the federal level but also on the state level and down to the municipal level, where you have as you mentioned, mayors and council people and I think it's beginning to start here in North America and especially in Canada where some of the cities now have what they call a food charter out now where they are going to promote good food, safe food, for the people or the citizens of their community. I know the city of Prince Albert has a food charter, city of Toronto, city of Chicago, where they are becoming very concerned about, especially promoting organic food for their residents.

JS: One thing you learned about yesterday was the grain CSA connection, so this connection between this community supported agriculture program and Creston with this genetically-engineered free zone in that this is going to be an alternative that will be presented to farmers who are already growing genetically-engineered crops where the campaign will say "OK, here's another market for your land, you can grow different grain, you can get a local market and you can be secured perhaps even more money than you are getting for your canola." What do you think about this alternative, and what sort of suggestions would you have to the campaign in presenting this option to farmers?

PS: First of all, I think it is a great policy and a great program and if I looked say at California in certain areas where consumers will come to a farm and pay up front for different vegetables and food that they want, it guarantees farmers that income, they know they have a market for their crops. The consumer is very happy with it because they know they will be getting organic food and different types of food as the season changes. So to me, I think it is one of the greatest programs that you could ever, ever have. And it benefits both sides – the farmer and the consumer.

Song:

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.
And for the rights of all farmers
To grow their own seed
And 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!

Farmin' 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,
And they claimed they were the owner of his yield,
They threatened and harassed him with thugs of every sort,
Then they set out to destroy the man in court.

JS: That was this week's edition of Deconstructing Dinner, produced and recorded at Nelson, British Columbia's Kootenay Co-op Radio. I've been your host Jon Steinman. I thank my technical assistant John Ryan.

The theme music for Deconstructing Dinner is courtesy of Nelson-area resident Adham Shaikh.

This radio program is provided free of charge to campus/community radio stations across the country, and relies on the financial support from you the listener.

Support for the program can be donated through our web site at deconstructingdinner.ca or by dialing 250-352-9600.