

**Show Transcript
Deconstructing Dinner
Kootenay Co-Op Radio CJLY
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Title: The Future of Prison Farms V (Abducted Cows)

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Jon Steinman - Welcome to Deconstructing Dinner, produced in Nelson, British Columbia at Kootenay Co-op Radio CJLY. I'm Jon Steinman. This radio show is heard across Canada on campus/community radio stations including CJLX 91.3 FM Belleville, Ontario.

With four episodes having now been devoted to covering the closure of Canada's prison farms, today's part five of our coverage, marks a disappointing chapter for Canadians who have been struggling to maintain their over 100-year old presence across the country. While all six of these rehabilitative and job-training programs, have for the past year and half been progressively dismantled, the removal of the dairy herd at Kingston Ontario's Frontenac Institution on Monday, August 9th, is being seen by many as a nail in the coffin.

On today's episode, we hear from supporters of the prison farm program on the steps, that the Save Our Prison Farms Campaign took since we last covered this issue back in June. We'll learn about the 500-person strong citizen blockade, which attempted to stop the removal of the dairy herd off the property and we'll hear about what next steps campaign organizers believe are necessary, to keep this campaign alive and to possibly shift efforts to turning this into an election issue. Which in doing so, might take advantage of the support of the Liberal Party and the NDP, who have both vowed to re-open the farms, should they be elected.

Lending their voice to the show today; Diane Dowling – a Kingston area dairy farmer and Vice President of the National Farmers Union's Local 316, Aric McBay – also a Kingston area farmer and an established author and Andrew McCann of Urban Agriculture Kingston – one of a number of organizations supporting the Save our Prison Farms Campaign.

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The prison farm issue, has become quite a focus of attention here on the show and we've also been using our Facebook page, as a forum for regular updates on the campaign to save the prison farm's program. And it's an issue of focus for many reasons... it shines a light on the get big or get out agricultural policies of Canada's Conservative-led government, it exposes the government's "get tough on crime" agenda and the Correctional Service of Canada's transformation agenda, it demonstrates the government's lack of transparency when making decision's that clearly are not in the interest of the majority of Canadians, it provides evidence that is suggestive of the government's intention to construct super prisons on the land that was

once producing food and it demonstrates how a public institution can effectively feed itself and others and at the same time help support a viable regional food and agricultural economy. Those being just *some*, of the reasons that we've spent so much time on this issue.

When we last aired part 4 of this future of prison farms series, we learned about Canadian author Margaret Atwood and her participation in the Save our Prison Farms Campaign. We heard audio from protests organized in Ottawa and on the streets of Kingston, when Atwood and hundreds of supporters marched to the regional headquarters of the Correctional Service of Canada and we also heard about the Community on Watch Stations, where prison farm supporters volunteered to stay on watch and make sure that Frontenac Institution's dairy herd *did not* leave the property. Helping explain what transpired from that point, is Diane Dowling – a dairy farmer on Howe Island and the Vice-President of the National Farmers Union's Local 316. Dianne spoke with Sonja Gregard of CFRC's Alternative Frequency.

Diane Dowling – Well, on June the 6th, we had a really large rally and march. We think between 850 and 1000 people participating and during that rally, we handed out forms for people to sign up, for such things as keeping an eye on the property because we were concerned that they might try to truck the cattle out of there. You know, perhaps even in the dark of the night and we were prepared to have a phone tree and to call people in, if cattle trucks did show up. So, we needed to have people watching the gates at Frontenac Institution, so we set up a recreational trailer, across the road from the main gates at Collins Bay and people signed up for shifts that varied from three or four hours, to the overnight shift, which was about ten hours. We always had the slots filled. People took it very seriously but at the same time, they felt it was valuable and I would say they even had some fun doing it. People were dropping in and wanting to sign petitions and dropping contributions of food or money to us at the trailer and offering suggestions of have you thought of this or have you thought of that or just giving support and it was a really heartening experience. Of course, volunteers like to have something real to do and this was a real job to do. It was great to see people coming out in pairs or individuals signing up for these time slots.

Now just this past week, we had a meeting with the Regional Commissioner, Ross Taller. So, he's the Commissioner for the Ontario and Nunavut region of Corrections and we have had meetings with him probably five or six times over the time of this campaign, where we've asked questions and he's shared some information with us and so on, but we had a meeting with him last Monday, and we really emphasized that we were very resolved, to continue to keep a watch and to blockade but we were also equally prepared to sit down and work with Corrections on ways to keep the farm going and also to meet the Corrections objective of having work opportunities, work release opportunities and training opportunities for the inmates, that would lead them to finding employment. I think that we made some points, for instance that St. Lawrence College just announced a new innovation center for green technology and there are such possibilities as biomass energy generators that generate energy using manure. So you need a farm, to begin that process and there's a program for farmers to put solar panels on their property and sell energy to the provincial government. So, there is lots of opportunities in the green technology field, which I think, will provide opportunities for employment of inmates, upon release, if they get training in it and these are new fields, where employers are looking for people. So, we are trying to present it as a win, win situation, that the farm stays and that new programming is added to it and that Corrections might take another look at the possibilities. And

after that meeting with Ross Taller, there was a request from his boss in Ottawa, the Commissioner for the whole Correctional service, to meet with us on July the 9th. Mr. Taller promised us, that nothing would be sold off the farm, the cattle and the chickens, would not move off the farm ahead of that meeting and that the Commissioner, whose name is Don Head, was prepared to meet with us and to hear our ideas and to gauge our resolve and our ability to work with them.

Jon Steinman - Diane Dowling. That proposal made to Commissioner Don Head, was refused by the government which then led to campaign organizers taking legal action against the government. That effort, was also not successful and the campaign turned to one focused on the use of civil disobedience, to prevent the closure of the prison farm.

Diane Dowling - The week that we had the meeting with Mr. Head, we had a legal action starting. An application for an injunction, to stop dismantling of the prisons, based on a section of the Corrections Act which says that Corrections has a duty to consult with inmates, before making major changes in their conditions and they had not consulted with the inmates, in fact they had not consulted with their citizens advisory committee either or any kind of public consultation, or their staff, from what I can understand. They were going to be setting up a hearing, they didn't know the date at that time but we heard later, that it was set for last week, last Thursday, July 15th and that hearing was in Ottawa. Unfortunately, the judge dismissed the application. Until the hearing took place, there was sort of a de facto moratorium on any action happening at the farm, any dismantling because it was before the courts but as soon as the judge gave his ruling on the 16th of July, that he had dismissed it, that de facto moratorium was over. So, we have taken a look at some options, one of them is of course to carry through with the civil disobedience and blockade of the trucks.

Jon Steinman - That blockade, was carried out on Sunday, August 8th and Monday August 9th, prior to which was another act of civil disobedience, when hundreds of supporters gathered once again at the Correctional Service of Canada's regional headquarters on July 23rd, when people there blocked the entrance to the property. Helping organize and educate the campaign with civil disobedience tactics, was Aric McBay, a local farmer and author who along with his partner on Howe Island, operate a small Community Supported Agriculture program for area residents. Aric, has also authored and co-authored a number of books including, *Peak Oil Survival: Preparation for Life after Gridcrash*. He's the co-author of *What We Leave Behind*, which he collaborated on with Derrick Jensen. And he also co-authored the soon-to-be-released, *Deep Green Resistance: Strategy to Save the Planet*, which was too a collaboration with Derrick Jensen and also Lierre Keith.

Aric spoke to CFRC's Elamin Abdelm Mahmoud.

Elamin Abdelm Mahmoud - We are on the line with Aric McBay, and thank you so much for joining us, on such short notice.

Aric McBay - Thank you.

Elamin Abdelmahmoud - Tell us about your involvement first, with the Save Our Prison Farms Campaign.

Aric McBay – I'm one of the organizers of the Save Our Prison Farms Campaign. I've been working on it, especially in the last three or four months. The campaign has been going for 18 months and has used lobbying, even some legal measures and petitions and protests and so on but even that was looking like it was not working. I was brought in to talk and assist with a potential shift towards civil disobedience. Which, is what has been playing out, especially in the last few days.

Elamin Abdelmahmoud - It certainly has, can you take us through the preparation for the civil disobedience process first?

Aric McBay - Sure. So, the civil disobedience, is something that we have been working on for a while and kind of kicked off this strategy at a rally with Margaret Atwood on June 6th. You know, the idea of civil disobedience, is that when a government refuses to be accountable and transparent, when it refuses to listen to people, when it refuses to basically abide by the basic principles of democracy, it's not only acceptable but even a duty of citizens to use civil disobedience, to protect their democracy and that's something that's happened here. You know, there's mass support in Kingston and all over the country, for keeping the prison farms open and the Conservative government, has utterly ignored that. They've refused to engage in any discussions, they've refused to make transparent their budgets for the prisons farms and statistics about recidivism rates, for inmates. So they've completely refused to engage on that level and essentially left the people of Kingston no choice but to use civil disobedience, to try to block the cattle trucks that were moving out to sell the cows at auction, to sell the Frontenac herd, which was the last herd, that remained at any of the prison farms in Canada.

Jon Steinman - The initial July 23rd blockade of the Correctional Service of Canada's regional headquarters, was a successful practice for what at that point, was the expected blockade of the prison itself, to prevent the dairy herd from being trucked off to auction. CFRC Kingston, was on the ground at that blockade and interviewed area farmer and National Farmers Union Local 316 director, Jeff Peters, who was accompanied by Stormy the Donkey.

Jeff Peters - (background singing/chanting) Well, we are so impressed with the community response today. Look at the rain coming down, and we have almost two hundred people here. So these people can not be ignored. There will be a time, when the government figures out that they are losing to many votes over this issue. They didn't think this issue was going to balloon into an issue of such magnitude. And all across the country, coalitions of groups, have joined us in this fight, so it's not just Kingston who is upset, it's the whole country, especially, rural Canada. When you put down agriculture, the way they have done in this issue, rural Canada will remember that because farming is basically the cornerstone, of rural Canada.

Elamin Abdelmahmoud - I think what we have in the making, is an election issue. We've seen a lot of different parties come across from the other side of the Conservative party, just saying their so wrong, this is a form of political vandalism. Where do you think this is going to go next?

Jeff Peters - Stormy behave. This is an election issue, or it will be because there's so many Conservative members of parliament, especially from rural Canada, that can't understand the rational. In their Conservative party, there's factions that are saying, why can't there be a compromise or a solution to this issue? Some of the Conservatives are very upset, at the leadership of the party and how stubborn and ill informed this whole thing has been. So, there's going to be in this community, I really feel sorry for Brian Abrams, he's a good man but he can't represent the people. He has been mugged by his leader, and unable to carry out his real job. So, I feel sorry for him in one respect.

Elamin Abdelmahmoud - And today you brought a friend with you to the protest, tell us about that.

Jeff Peters - Stormy, has been our mascot for sometime. He has had numerous trips to the capital city. He almost got arrested in the early spring because he saw all the green grass and he bolted onto the hill. The RCMP were very upset with Stormy but some of those people even know that this campaign, that deep down in them, they support us and they are always giving us a wink on the side saying "keep it up because this worth fighting for," so Stormy's going to stick with us, just like the rest of the people will.

Jon Steinman - This is Deconstructing Dinner and that was Jeff Peters speaking to CFRC's Elamin Abdelmahmoud, on July 23rd. Your listening to part 5 of our series titled The Future of Prison Farms. Past episodes, including an archived version of *this* episode can be found on our website, at deconstructingdinner.ca

It wasn't long after that July 23rd act of civil disobedience, when it was learned that Frontenac Institution's dairy herd, was to be moved off the property in the coming weeks and sent to auction in Waterloo. A number of auction houses in Ontario, bowed to public pressure and refused to auction off the cows, however, the Ontario Livestock Exchange did not, choosing to instead *support* the Conservative government and the closure of the prison farm program. Here's Dianne Dowling.

Diane Dowling - Something that we did learn from the court hearing was that in the CSC's presentation to us, they had the specific dates for the sale of the herd and the preparations for that and they do have a sale scheduled for a facility in Waterloo, for August the 3rd and its going to be a video tape sale, so they wont be moving the cattle out specifically for the sale. They'll video tape the cattle ahead of time and they'll bring buyers together at the facility, I guess, and show them the video tapes and people will bid on the animals. Once their sold then they will have to be trucked out of Frontenac Institution and we're taking some steps, we're trying to prevent the sale from happening. We've been talking to the people that run the auction service and alerting them to the fact that this is a controversial sale. That there will be protesters at the sale, that we've promised to blockade the trucks and that our position statement saying that the prison farm program, should be continued, is supported by all the major farm groups in Ontario, plus the national level of the Federation of Agriculture and the National Farmers Union, as well as many food and environment and social justice groups. But of course, the major ones that would be of interest to a farm auction service, are the farm organizations. Various people from the organizations have been phoning the sales facility and were hoping they'll reconsider their

decision. We know that a couple of other sale services, auctioning services, looked at a job before and declined it. So, if we can create an environment where none of the major auction services want to get involved that's going to slow things down.

Jon Steinman - Dianne Dowling, interviewed on CFRC Kingston, Ontario.

On August 8th and 9th, the Save Our Prison Farms Campaign, did indeed blockade the entrances to Frontenac Institution. Here again, is Aric McBay interviewed on CFRC on August 9th describing the days' actions.

Elamin Abdelmehmoud - That civil disobedience process really kicked into high gear yesterday didn't it?

Aric McBay - Yes, that's right. Now, it's something of course, that we have been planning since June. We've been having training sessions, we've been getting people ready. We had a blockade of Corrections headquarters, several weeks ago, as part of that training and to try to put pressure on them. But we've also had the community on watch station, of course, at various times, it's been a twenty-four hour vigil, in front of the Frontenac Institution, observing and looking for any sign, that they are trying to move cattle trucks in. And then we found out late last week, that there was going to be a live auction, at the Ontario Livestock Exchange in Waterloo. Originally, they had planned for a video auction or internet auction but they planned for a live auction. Which means, we knew they would be shipping the cows out this weekend, visually Sunday and Monday, which they did because they have to milk the cows on a pretty regular basis.

Elamin Abdelmehmoud - Right.

Aric McBay - And so people, were prepared. And on Sunday, we had about 500, at least 500 people out for a blockade at that point, when the first empty trucks were arriving. So, four empty trucks arrived, around two in the afternoon. There were 500 people there and we refused to move. So, we stopped the trucks and the police threatened to arrest everyone but they simply didn't have the capacity, to arrest that number of people who were engaging in peaceful civil disobedience.

Elamin Abdelmehmoud - Right.

Aric McBay - So, they started to arrest some people at random. The people who were arrested, were ranging in age from 14-87, so that really tells you about the broad base of support the broad demographics, that support the prison farms. That people refused to move. And so, what happened, kind of late last night, the blockade had been taken place in the pouring rain and everyone there was soaking wet. About 6:30, there was kind of a discussion/vote in which the blockaders decided, that on the promise of the police, that they wouldn't try to move the cows out until this morning. That they would kind of move aside, regroup, get dried out, and come back first thing in the morning, today, Monday. And so, that's what happened and people returned this morning, to find that the Kingston Police had called in probably about a 150-200 OPP Officers. It's hard to say exactly how many were, there because some of them were still waiting in buses. And you know, these OPP officers today, were willing to be much more

aggressive and much rougher with people, despite the ages that we've already talked about. That people had their kids and they were willing to do whatever it took to stop people from getting in front of the trucks.

Jon Steinman - Also participating in the blockade, was Andrew McCann of Urban Agriculture Kingston. The Frontenac Institution is the largest urban farm in the country and as Andrew sees it, is an obvious asset to protect for the City of Kingston and the people of Canada. Andrew has become a familiar voice, as part of this series on the Future of Prison Farms and he spoke to Deconstructing Dinner, yet again, about the effectiveness, of the August 8th and 9th actions.

Andrew McCann – They really are two different days, and I'm not sure how much that was by design in terms of the Correctional Services part and the police's part. I think it was a bit, we'd heard from our inside sources all along, that Sunday was going to be a test and then Monday, they were definitely going to get the cows out. So, that's exactly what happened but I do think that, the police and the Correctional Services were kind of surprised by the strength of the public turnout and their resolve on Sunday. So you know, over 500 people were really able to stop them from getting the trucks in. After several hours of pouring rain, we actually decided as a leadership, that we would stand down and that the 150 or so people that were still there, we were going to ask them to go home and come back in the morning. Because we were quite concerned that, if we asked people to stay, it was going to get dark soon and then there would only be 50 of us left and we were going to need stronger supporters and then if we got arrested, and dragged away, then who was going to be there in the morning to kind of really lead things.

So we made that decision, but I must say, Sunday was a victory because we made that decision to go and there was a very intense hour long period where the police, the Kingston Police, were trying to drag people away. Their strategy, was very different on Sunday from Monday. On Sunday, they targeted weaker links in the chain. They targeted a 14 year old girl, an 87 year old woman, lots of women. A majority of the nine people arrested on Sunday, were women. They targeted weak links in the chain and that seems to have been their strategy because they thought that they are easier to get away from the crowd and they thought that would discourage or deter other people but it just had the opposite effect. Like, it was an unbelievable mix, of old, young and people with babies and everybody was just standing their ground in this line.

And eventually, you should've seen the police, I personally was on the megaphone or on the loudspeaker/pa system, that we had set up and the discourse from the chants from the crowd and from myself as well. We were saying things like; "Police Officers of Kingston, how can you be dragging away your friends and your neighbours? We are going to see you downtown next week. We're going to see you at the grocery store. How can you be dragging away citizens who are trying to help you do your job, by keeping our city safer, by keeping a program going, that genuinely rehabilitates inmates and therefore, makes them less dangerous when they come out into our community? We are trying to help you do your job and you're trying to drag us away." You know, the idea we were saying was look, you're on orders from Steven Harper, this is our community and we are telling you, that as a majority of citizens in Kingston, that we want this program to stay. Sometimes the law is wrong, sometimes as a police officer, you just need to walk away and that's actually the right thing to do and to stay and ignore the majority of your fellow citizens is actually to break the law. You're breaking the law, by staying here now.

So, that was the kind of discourse that went on and it wasn't just me barking on the loud speaker, it was hundreds of people saying things and chanting. You could see, they were very nervous and most of them did not want to be there. Sure, there were a few hot heads, who were enjoying the rush of the moment, after all their years of training and imagining, whatever, that they were going to be a gunslinger or something like that. But the vast majority of police officers, I genuinely believe are good people, who want to help their community. And these people, I think most of them realized, that they were not helping their community and that they were going against their own community and it was a very intense, emotional, powerful experience. Absolutely different from Monday, when there were dozens of OPP officers, at least a dozen Toronto police officers, I guess, that were brought in because of their recent experience with the G20 summit. And it was just a completely different mood and a completely different reaction from the crowd and from the police, it was totally different. We had no chance on Monday, that's for sure, whereas on Sunday, we genuinely had a victory.

Protest clips - Sounds of chanting about democracy and singing of O' Canada.

Jon Steinman - And those were the sounds of supporters of Canada's prison farm program, who on August 8th and 9th, attempted to block the entrance to Kingston Ontario's Frontenac Institution, with the hopes of preventing the prison's dairy herd from being trucked off the property to auction. Video and images of the blockade, are linked to on the Deconstructing Dinner website and the August 12th, 2010 broadcast. Within some of the video footage linked to there, you'll notice an interesting contrast of ideologies. Whereby hundreds of people, are seen advocating for the self-sufficient and food secure model, that these farms have been demonstrating now for over one-hundred years. And as the cows are being shipped off the property, you can see in the background, waiting to enter the facility, a SYSCO truck – one of the largest food-service distributors in North America, whose products are certainly *not* originating from anywhere close to the Kingston area. Again, you can check those videos and images out by linking to them, on the Deconstructing Dinner website.

When we come back, more from Aric McBay and Andrew McCann of the Save Our Prison Farms campaign.

Who Let the Cows Out song -

*Friday night I was dressed to kill, I was heading to the bar, in my Coupe de Ville;
I was looking good, I was feeling fine, and I had a half drunk bottle of Boone's farm wine ;
On the road ahead, in front of me, was a bunch of dark shadows I could hardly see;
The closer I got, the more I saw, they were everywhere, they was cows ya'll.*

Chorus: Who let the cows out, moo, moo, moo x4

*Well, I grabbed the wheel and I hit the brakes, everything on the Caddy was starting to shake;
Off the road and into the ditch, I was driving that Caddy like a son of a bitch;
Hit the culvert ahead and away I flew, I was airborne and the cows were to;
When the Caddy touched down, I was back on the road, perfect landing Caddy never slowed.*

Chorus: Who let the cows out, moo, moo, moo x4

*I was cussing like hell I was screaming out loud;
In my whole damn life, never saw so many cows;
Everything was ok, had the bar inside, just a small hiccup up on a Friday night,
Never in my life was my luck so good, thanks to the Caddy and what's under the hood;
I seemed fine, as far as I could tell, just one little thing, what's that smell?*

Chorus: Who let the cows out, moo, moo, moo x4

Jon Steinman - This is Deconstructing Dinner, a syndicated radio show and podcast out of Nelson, British Columbia's Kootenay Co-op Radio CJLY. I'm Jon Steinman. You can visit our website, at deconstructingdinner.ca where over 180 episode are now archived, including many more resources, that offer in-depth listening, reading and viewing, on everything to do with food systems, food security and simply eating well.

Today, is part 5 of our series, The Future of Prison Farms. On August 8th and 9th, a heavy blow was dealt to the Save Our Prison Farms Campaign. When the almost 300 animal dairy herd of Canada's Frontenac Institution, was trucked off the property to auction. Canadians are outraged at the decision by Canada's Conservative-led government, who have, by all accounts, ignored what is clearly an overwhelming amount of support for the program and clearly in Kingston Ontario, the unofficial prison capital of Canada, there is tremendous opposition by groups and people of all types, to the decision to close the prison farms there. To get a sense of just how much support there was in the Kingston area – support that the Conservative Party has clearly ignored, I asked Andrew McCann of Urban Agriculture Kingston, to describe the tone in the Kingston area, leading up to the August 8th and 9th days of action.

Andrew McCann – It was actually very interesting because it's not very often that I've been involved in a majoritarian cause and that's definitely without question, what this has become. So, the media by us is strongly in our favour. In this city at least, the vast majority and I would just guesstimate, maybe 80 to 90 per cent and there is both voluntary *Globe and Mail* and voluntary *CBC* polls online, with over ten thousand, or several thousand participants in the *CBC* one and I think over ten thousand in the *Globe and Mail* and it was like 92 and 94 per cent of Canadians support the prison farms. Ok, those aren't scientific polls for sure but you got to take something from those numbers. You know, I think it's very similar in the Kingston area but the interesting thing about that is and I've never been involved before in this personally, is that the uncritical majority of people, are actually in support of keeping these prison farms and are being very critical of the government. So what I find is, the few people and there really are very few that are actually in favour of the government's decision, they aren't the mindless Conservative supporters, they're actually all thoughtful people. Like everybody I talked to, who thinks the government is making the right move, has thought about it and has a basis for their opinions, which makes for some very interesting discussions. The vast majority of them, work for CSC (Correctional Services of Canada), which is not an insignificant group of Kingston's population. And the actually have a rational, for the most part and that's very interesting because I think in this case, unlike most things I've ever been involved in, the average non-critical citizen has just

read a few articles and has just decided that these programs are a great idea for one or two very simple reasons, without considering the other complexities. So, they'll say, "Oh it's good that these guys grow food for themselves because they are lazy bums or whatever. They should be feeding themselves." and they don't necessarily have other perspectives on it or other thoughts about it or other arguments. So, it's a bit weird I must say, to have the support of people, who do not necessarily really have a lot of thoughts about why they are supporting you.

Jon Steinman - Andrew McCann *was* arrested, among others at the August 8th blockade and subsequently released on bail. Also at the rally, was Aric McBay who we heard from earlier. Aric was interviewed following the second day of the blockade, by CFRC's Elamin Abdelmahmoud.

Elamin Abdelmahmoud - I showed up this morning, on site at Conn's Bay. It was like a scene from the G20 in Toronto. It was a spot where there were more cops than there were people. Many buses of police officers, standing around. OPP officers, Kingston Police, were in different uniforms, kind of thing. Was that expected?

Aric McBay- Well you know, we were never really sure exactly what strategy they were going to go for. I think that we had anticipated, that there would be more attempts at subterfuge because there are two entrances to Frontenac. We had wondered, if they were going to try to sneak the cows out and avoid a public spectacle. That they would try to bring the trucks in and move them overnight and bring them out and that's not what they did. I think that this policy that they've chosen today, is kind of reflective of the broader policy of the Harper Government in general. That there is not a lot of subtlety and that their approach is really, rather than try to negotiate or engage, is basically try to bully people around and try to bully communities into doing what they want. And that's what we saw here, you know, the Kingston support was very strong and so they had to bring in these people from out of town, to use violence to disperse protesters.

Elamin Abdelmahmoud - Do you think the police were out of line at least, in their actions today?

Aric McBay- I think they were, yes. I think they were very aggressive, unnecessarily so. I think people who are law abiding citizens, have lost a lot of respect for them today. Regular people, lost a lot of respect for them today. It was clear by the constant honking of people driving by in their cars, that there was huge support and these regular people driving by, saw their neighbours being dragged off. Literally being dragged off, by these aggressive police, who were striking people and shoving them to the ground. So, I think this totally unacceptable action, to use this kind of violence on peaceful protesters. I mean for god sakes', there were nuns there. So, it's just ridiculous to see and then this is one of the reasons that the Prison Farms Campaign has gained so much traction. Is that in this country, we are really seeing that shift toward more extensive use of police powers. You know, state sanctioned use of police violence against peaceful people and you know, here we are protesting against a government that's using violence to put people in jail unnecessarily and they respond by using violence and arresting protesters to put them in jail unnecessarily.

Jon Steinman - A total of 24 people were arrested during the peaceful demonstration, all of whom were later released on bail. To give you a sense of the wide range of people involved in the protest, among those arrested were; Royal Military College professors, a retired United Church minister, a Queen's University physics student, the president of a local federal electoral riding association, a teacher and a lab technician. All of them were criminally charged with mischief, for trying to sit in front of the cattle trucks taking away the 280-head herd. Bail hearings are set for September 14th.

One of those arrested, was Patrick Thompson and he wrote a letter describing his arrest and his sentiments about the blockade, his letter read:

Dear Prison Farm Campaign Supporters,

My name is Patrick Thompson, and I am proud to count myself as one of those arrested today.

Today was a great day for me. Yes, the cows are gone, which is an incalculable loss, but there was a sense of community and purpose that I have never felt. Thank you for all that. I was moved to tears by Dianne Dowling's speech. Tears for the realization that this is not the country that we have been taught we live in, and that solidified my commitment to become "unlawful." Yesterday singing O Canada, I felt that, "we stand on guard for thee" means us, citizens, stand guard. Today I am proud to say we did stand on guard for our democracy.

Sitting in jail, looking around at my fellow patriots, was incredible and peaceful. Everyone seemed tranquil, and it is my perspective that it is because everyone felt 100% just in their actions. We have upcoming legal concerns to deal with now, but that feels of little consequence, with such a strong sense of purpose. It is imperative for people to know, that we still have a friend continuing the fight in detention. Unwilling to accept unjust conditions of bail from the crown, he has decided to forgo food and remain. Truly he is a giant among us.

And just as he continues the fight, so must we. If this government does not want prison farms, then we don't want them. We must stay motivated and engaged. We must ensure this government never obtains a majority. We must ensure whoever comes after this regime remains accountable, transparent, and attentive to the peoples will. It is not an easy road ahead, but we can rebuild prison farms, we can reclaim our inherent control of democracy.

Please, do not be dismayed by the loss of the cows. This movement is vibrant, strong and just. I cannot express my appreciation and gratitude for the tireless work the organizers of this campaign, and the thousands of supporters. We have made a difference, and we will not stop the endless journey towards a more perfect society.

Patrick Thompson

soundbite

Jon Steinman - One area that we haven't directed any attention to throughout this Future of Prison Farms series, has been the organizing of the campaign itself. The Save Our Prison Farms

Campaign, has proven to be one of the more successful community-driven efforts to rally around a food security issue over this past year and resist what, in this case, has been perceived as a threat to a community's food security. From our perspective here at Deconstructing Dinner, we've come to recognize an important lesson that this particular campaign has taught, that there is a tremendous amount of power, when any community comes together around a multi-dimensional food security issue, such as the closure of the prison farms in the Kingston, Ontario area. In this case, people from all different sectors and political stripes within the community, have gathered around what might appear as a small concern but is of course representative of so many bigger and more fundamental issues. Andrew McCann, has brought his urban agriculture lens to the campaign but he speaks of the community building, that this campaign has provided to the people of the Kingston area.

Andrew McCann – For the vast majority of the work, that the various leaders involved in the Save Our Prison Farms Campaign do, is actually on building actively and positively re-building and building our sustainable local farm and food system. So this is a bit of an exception, I mean we have been involved as a region in biotech, and Save Our Seeds campaign in the past, which also had a critical protest orientated angle. So, this is the first thing in a long time. So it's interesting for that, in that it's been huge, in engaging a broader demographic of the population. And I think, we were quite specific as leaders, in choosing to put so much time and energy into this campaign because we realize that it connects farm land preservation, with farm and food issues in general and the insult that the government has given to farmers in general by saying that, this program is not relevant, that farming is not a relevant training program, etc., so there's that. But then there's the whole side of transformation of the criminal justice system, the transformation of Corrections Canada, the building of super prisons, so pulling all these issues together, has really brought in a new demographic. But the core group of people involved in the campaign, are food activists and farm activists, so really, it's been an ongoing opportunity to educate, otherwise politically engaged citizens. What I would call the more socially engaged, as opposed the ecologically engaged and I think that it's a distinction that's important.

Jon Steinman - With the amount of momentum that has been created in the community because of the prison farm issue, there are many questions now on the table as to how that momentum might be carried forward, despite the all-important dairy herd having been removed from Frontenac Institution. Aric McBay and Andrew McCann speak to *some* of those possible next steps.

Aric McBay - In the next few days, in the next week, we are going to re-group and you know this was the last line of defence for the prison farm here but it's also the first line of defence in new struggles. The struggle against the development of that land, the struggle against the construction of a new mega prison there and I think that you know, the people that are arrested today, they were in high spirits and the people that I spoke to, even those who were watching the trucks go away, their resolve was made even stronger by the actions of the government today. I think that the Conservative Government doesn't realize the level, of strategic mistake they've made here, by trying to keep bullying people and by angering such a large segment of the community. So I think that in the coming weeks, we'll see this campaign move into a new phase, into a larger campaign, that's about food and justice in this community.

Andrew McCann – Well, I don't know if you heard already but several of the cows were bought by people from Kingston, at the auction in Waterloo yesterday. So there is talk of setting up a cow share program here in Kingston, modelled on Michael Schmidt's cow share, in Western Ontario, so there's talk of that. I mean that's really complicated, not just because setting up is complicated and getting it to work but I think more importantly actually, it's a policy issue, especially from the National Farm Workers point of view, which is one of the key organizations involved. I represented Urban Agriculture Kingston on the campaign but I'm very close and work very closely with NFU Farmers and their policy and many of them are dairy farmers who have quota, directly contradicts with that plan, that idea. So, I'm a little worried about that whole situation because there are many people who are passionately against the quota system and it worries me a little bit because it actually has a lot of potential to cause a split, that I don't know if a lot of people realize that. Some people are really excited about this idea and other farmers are actually a little wary and I don't think they've really said very much yet. They are kind of waiting to see if it gets followed through on, before they try to intervene. But anyway that's an idea that's gaining a lot of momentum right now, that I think is exciting but also a bit worrisome in terms of unity. But it's already been in the news a bit, or at least the cows being brought home. The other thing is, there are 20 cows that are still on the farm. Pregnant cows that just gave birth, or were just about to give birth and they are going to be sold more locally, possibly as early as next week. And the idea is, to organize, to try to buy as many of those as possible. And again the question is going to be, what to do with them because obviously, there's the whole question of the quota system.

In terms of other activities, what we really need to do and I think that this is a big lesson for any community organizing, is what we really need to do here, is celebrate. There has literally been thousands of citizens involved in this movement at different points along the way. Whether it was when Margaret Atwood marched and pinned the door on the Corrections headquarters or the Sarah Harmer concert, there was almost a thousand people at each of those events and then these events on the weekend. So, we're going to have a party, essentially and celebrate the victory and the effort and the coming together of all these communities that have been involved. And then the next steps after that, we're talking about town hall meetings in September, to do further education.

I got to tell you though Jon, like, that one of the things that worries me is that, as I said before, some people who were involved more as political activists, are really excited by the mass mobilization of citizens and citizen's willingness to engage with civil disobedience. Whereas many of us in the farm and food movement, that have other projects that we are working on, are really burnt out from this and are looking to step back. And it's exactly those political people, who are getting excited and coming to meetings and wanting to step into leadership positions but that's going to fundamentally change the tone of the campaign. So when they talk about town hall meetings, they're really thinking about sort of meetings about protests and civil disobedience and stuff like that. And while I do think, that's a good idea and we have conducted workshops about that as well in the past. I'm worried that if we don't keep the eye on the ball, in terms of why people are involved in the campaign and why really everyday citizens, it's really generally aware and educated citizens but were not talking about radical political folks here. I'm just worried about losing people a little bit, if it gets to politicized. So, who knows where it's going to go exactly but there's definitely a sense of community engagement that needs to be followed up

on. Under what leadership and what energy is the key question. And then in the longer term, or maybe the not so longer term, there's the issue of the upcoming Federal election and this is definitely going to be a focal point, not only in this riding but in some neighbouring ridings. Unfortunately, the Liberal MP for our riding Peter Milliken, who is a speaker for the House, one of the longest serving members of the House of Commons, and the Liberal party, has stepped down. The Conservative candidate for this riding, who ran last year as well, is actually a very strong candidate, he gave Milliken, a run for his money. First time since 1988, I think, that Milliken had really had a run for his money. Anyways, that's very worrisome, that this riding could be one the ones that swings and helps the Conservatives potentially get a majority government in Canada.

So, we are definitely focusing on this issue, to help with the election campaign that's coming up but I also know that, especially the farmers, are looking to help roll this issue out, the Prison Farm issue out, as one that would be part of a broader farmer's movement against the Conservative Government across Canada. And I think this raises a really interesting question, about what's happening within Conservative circles, Conservative ideology and policy and theory around agriculture. I would speculate, that based on the responses that we've got and the discourse around capital intensive export orientated agricultural that the Conservatives are touting, that they really have a vision that is quite distinct, not only from their roots but from the vast majority of their supporters, which is almost an anti-rural, anti-agrarian discourse. Where, farming is a thing of the past and the only place for agriculture is in huge mega farms and anything else is short sighted and stupid because agriculture has fundamentally changed and the future of agriculture is a very small number of huge agri-businesses. And that's actually shocking, that they've without discord within the party, been able to tout that line and expect if they're pressured on it and maybe it has already been created over this prison farm issue, internal dissention within the Conservative Party. Because I know from personal contacts, that there are several MPs within the Conservative Party, who are very wary and actually quite upset with the stance their party has taken on this because this is pissing off farmers, this is pissing off rural communities because they view it as a direct affront to rural values, that this program is somehow out of date. Teaching inmates rural values by farming, is somehow an out of date thing, within Canada. So I think, with all that to say, I think to me, this is a bit of a tip of an iceberg, in terms of what does the Conservative Party of Canada really think, about the future of agriculture and the future of farming and food and is that really in line with their base supporters.

Jon Steinman - Andrew McCann, of Urban Agriculture Kingston and the Save our Prison Farms Campaign. Andrew spoke to Deconstructing Dinner from Kingston, Ontario. Also, a thanks to CFRC 101.9FM in Kingston, for their interviews with farmer and author Aric McBay and farmer and NFU Local 316 Vice-President Dianne Dowling. Again, you can stay posted to our Facebook page, for updates on how this campaign might move forward. You can also visit the Save Our Prison Farms Campaign, at saveourprisonfarms.ca. With the NDP and Liberal parties both vowing to *reopen* the prison farms if elected, this series here on the show might have some more episodes ahead of it. You can check out the Deconstructing Dinner website where we've posted a number of links to photos, videos and some additional audio not heard here, at deconstructingdinner.ca and the August 12th 2010 broadcast.

A public celebration for campaign supporters is planned for Thursday, August 19th, you can find out more information on the Save Our Prison Farms website.

YouTube Video Audio— For some reason, we are stuck at a green light and we got cops blocking us. There is nobody on the roads and there are protesters, protesting the closing of the prison farms. Personally if you ask me, I don't know about the other prisons in the middle of nowhere, but this prison is right in the middle of Kingston. I say close the god damn farm and put some buildings up there and make this city bigger and better. We don't need a farm, keep the prisoners in their cells, they don't even deserve to be outside. This is ridiculous. Let us go, we are just trying to go for a coffee here. Got protesters everywhere, for some reason, the cops won't even let us drive. That's why they stopped it, their bringing out the chickens. Oh yeah, that's why the protesters are here, we got trucks moving out, we're official shutting down, yeah close those damn farms, keep them in their cells. The protesters are pissed, why do they care, they don't, they just want a reason to protest. Stupid people. I'm not against keeping the farms like Joyceville or whatever, but the prisons that are actually out in the country, I say keep those farms open because really that land isn't worth shit, and if you can keep those prisoners out in the middle of nowhere on the farms doing whatever they want, growing their own food, then yeah, why the hell not, the land is worthless anyway. But, (honking, yelling, starts yelling at the protesters) "Hey shut up, shut the hell up! Go back to work, ya bum's! That's right in the middle of the fucking city. Close those god damn farms and build some good shit over there, that land is worth a lot of money, that's what I say about it! Keep the prisoners in the cells, those filthy criminals!"

Inserted Audio - A paid message, from Canada's Conservatives.

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Jon Steinman - 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.

And this radio program is provided free of charge to campus/community radio stations across the country. Should you wish to financially contribute to this program, we invite you to offer your support through our website at deconstructingdinner.ca or by dialing 250-352-9600.