

**Show Transcript
Deconstructing Dinner
Kootenay Co-op Radio
Nelson, B.C. Canada**

January 7, 2010

Title: Campaign for New Farmers / Farmers and the Global Food Crisis w/ Paul Nicholson

**Producer/Host: Jon Steinman
Transcript: Jessica Van Overbeek**

Jon Steinman: Welcome to Deconstructing Dinner – a syndicated radio show and podcast produced in Nelson, British Columbia at Kootenay Co-op Radio and broadcast on 39 stations across Canada and many more around the world. I'm Jon Steinman and today marks the 160th episode of the show and which happens to come at a time of the show's 4th birthday. On January 5th 2006, we aired our first-ever broadcast titled Why Deconstruct Dinner and over the past four years I think it's safe to say that the show has continually answered that question with every 1-hour broadcast we've produced to date. Similar to last week's episode, on today's show we listen in on more recordings from the annual conventions of Canada's National Farmers Union.

In late November 2009, the NFU gathered in Ottawa and hosted, among others, a panel of young farmers to help launch the Union's Campaign for New Farmers. We'll hear from Laird Saskatchewan's Kalissa Regier – the NFU's new Youth President, we'll hear from Hilary Moore a young farmer who operates the Teamwork Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program in Almonte Ontario, and we'll dip into the NFU convention archives and listen to an excellent talk delivered at the Union's 2008 convention featuring Spain's Paul Nicholson. Paul is a member of EHNE - the Basque Farmers Union and a member of the International Coordinating Committee of La Via Campesina – the international peasant movement, of family-farmers, indigenous and landless people. Paul's talk was titled, 'Farmers and the Global Food Crisis.'

increase music and fade out

Jon Steinman: For listeners on Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands, you might be interested to learn of an upcoming event taking place on Friday, February 5th - the city of Duncan, British Columbia will be hosting well-known Saskatchewan farmer and farmer's rights advocate Percy Schmeiser – a familiar voice here on Deconstructing Dinner. Percy will be hosted by the Cowichan Green Community and his talk will be part of two-days of workshops and panels. Again, that's Percy Schmeiser, Friday, February 5th, from 6-9pm at the Duncan Christian Reform Church at 930 Trunk Rd, Duncan BC. More info on the event at cowichangreencommunity.org.

soundbite

Jon Steinman: Our food system faces many crises, among which is the steady increase in the average age of the North American farmer. As farms have gotten bigger and bigger and as the business of farming proves less and less attractive, young farmers have become quite an anomaly. The Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture compiled a startling statistic that is likely not so different anywhere else in North America. With the average age of farmers in the province being 54 and with those farmers maintaining \$1.6 billion in farm capital (70% being in land and

buildings), about 50% of this capital will have to be transferred in the next 10 years when those farmers retire. With such high capital costs for the beginning farmer and an obligation to provide a reasonable source of retirement for the outgoing farmer, some pretty serious concerns face eaters and farmers alike. Part-time farmers and those who are nearing the end of their career may not be able or willing to leverage their operations to the extent required to enable a farm transition, and new entrants and young farmers may not be able to find transition support from either within their operations or from external sources. Canada's National Farmers Union has maintained a strong youth focus throughout its history and at their 2009 annual convention held in Ottawa this past November, the Union's Campaign for New Farmers was launched. To introduce the campaign was the NFU's new Youth President, Kalissa Regier. Kalissa farms organic mixed grains and oilseeds in Laird, Saskatchewan. In addressing the future of farmers and farming, Kalissa believes that there is no alternative but to find alternatives.

Kalissa Regier: My name is Kalissa Regier and I've been the Youth Vice president of the National Farmers' Union for the last three years and yesterday I was elected as the youth president for the National Farmers' Union. Thanks very much for all your attention today. It's really great to be here among a lot of my peers and all of the members present here, and the board members to launch the campaign for New Farmers. (applause)

It was during the NFU Youth meeting in July at a fishing lodge on the shores of the Loughborough Lake in Battersea Ontario, a very alluring place, that the inception for this campaign took place. Now conversation between new and young farmers is likely to sound very similar no matter what part of the world you happen to be in. In the Battersea meeting we spent a lot of time discussing our challenges. Asking the questions about how we can get adequate access to the needs of farming, how can we find hope in an industry and a profession that in the past has been so incredibly hopeless, and most importantly how can we begin to make a difference? Our conversation was diverse and very well grounded but it was clear that we needed something to organize around. Not only a platform to base our future work that's needed in the country, but a platform on which we can stand together with our alliances across the country and truly create a united voice for farmers beginning in Canada. So the idea for campaign for new farmers was born. To bring awareness to the country, to educate ourselves, to build bridges with our partners, and most of all to continue the fight. There are so many forces against new farmers in the world today it's a wonder why we exist at all. There are a few of us here to prove that we do.

The term 'endangered species' is quite suitable when speaking about the elusive creatures that are apparently going to take over the farms of tomorrow. In 2006, when the AG Census numbers came to us, stating that farmers under 35 had dropped from over 77,000 in 1991 to under 30,000 in 2006, a number of things were not done. Words like crisis and emergency were not used, agriculture policy was not reformed and the sheer magnitude of these numbers and what they mean for Canada's food system was not even acknowledged. It was business as usual. The good news is that I'm an optimist as many of the young people in this room today are as well. I was happy to keep with the consensus decision at the Battersea meeting to keep the campaign for new farmers moving in a hopeful and positive direction. Indeed there are many things to be hopeful about. We've seen examples here at convention of opportunities, programs, and exchanges that are contributing to this hope. We've also known that the farmer is responsible for this movement. Farmers like Caitlin Hall, Cammie Harbottle and Hillary Moore, Nathan Macklin who were working against all the odds. Sacrificing their financial stability, their social lives, and probably at times their sanity for the love of what they do. They are making the difference. Our associate members like Terran Giacomini and Paul Slomp are dedicating countless volunteer hours for the sake of what they see as an integral part of their future as well. This hope is evident everywhere and it was kept close at hand while we developed the core for the campaign.

The structure consists of three pillars of work. The first is awareness raising. Without the ability to communicate this message our work is redundant so developing a usable interactive website and releasing materials to the general public is critical for this. The second pillar is education and this includes exchange and succession planning as well. Partnering with existing programs inside and outside Canada will offer the new experiences to our members and an important opportunity to learn from each other as well as the generations before us. We also need to consider the education that *we* can provide to the others. So, this winter we will begin the development of a curriculum for formal submission to the provincial ministries of education - for a senior sciences course outlining the different models of agriculture how they connect to the food system and the controversial history and politics that they encompass. As well we will plan to continue the annual youth workshop with National Farmers' Union's youth- which has been in the past a great chance to improve our organizational skills and share our farming experiences. The third pillar of the campaign is policy analysis and development and we are all familiar with that being part of the NFU. In order for us to be truly effective we really need to see the results of our work in our government policy. It's probably the most difficult part of this campaign but the NFU is known for it's intense political analysis as well as its ability to find meaningful alternatives and this will need to continue in the future.

We recognize that we have been brought to a place as young farmers where there is no alternative but to find alternatives. So we will do this. We will find alternative means of communication, bringing our struggles and successes to the dinner table to every home in Canada. We'll seek out alternative training and education that exists formal and informal. We'll focus our attention on alternative agriculture policy that acknowledges the importance of having farmers on our farms, that gives credibility to small scale and local food productions, that protects the interests of all farmers through effective supply manage systems and farmer led marketing. We'll aim for an agriculture policy that recognizes that the most important natural resource for food production is not seeds, is not land, is not water - is farmers. (applause)

Kalissa Regier: We'll also commit ourselves. Commit to educate ourselves and our peers. Commit to practice our alternatives until they become the mainstream. We will commit to publicizing our findings and work together to findings and work together with our partners. We will commit to unifying our voice under this campaign and truly understand the model in union is strength. Finally, we will commit ourselves to tread a new path and work within the understanding that business as usual is not an option. So, in front of you, the members of the 40th anniversary of the National Farmers' Union I am pleased to announce the official launch of the campaign for new farmers. (applause)

Jon Steinman: This is Deconstructing Dinner and that was Kalissa Regier speaking in November 2009 in Ottawa at the National Farmers' Union's annual convention. Kalissa is the NFU's Youth President. She farms in Laird, Saskatchewan. Also sharing the microphone with Kalissa were a number of other young farmers including Hilary Moore. After graduating from Environmental Studies at Ottawa's Carleton University, Hilary gained valuable experience on farms in New York and Massachusetts to later return six years ago to Ontario and launch the Teamwork Community Supported Agriculture (or CSA) program at Dunbrae Farms in Almonte, Ontario. Hilary spoke of her journey as a young farmer and how she believes young farmers can be supported in the shadows of an aging farm population.

Hilary Moore: Hi, I'm Hilary Moore. I was asked to be part of this panel basically because of my experience over the past 11 years so I'm going to go through it. 11 years ago I apprenticed on a farm in Long Island New York after coming out of Carleton University with an armload of

frustration about the global food system and the way people treat the earth etcetera. I was in the Environmental Studies program, a very depressing program unless you can find a very optimistic article - which I did talking about a system called Community Supported Agriculture. I was very drawn to the way that that worked and the simplicity and the thoughtfulness behind that structure of farming. Without really giving it two cents of thoughts I found myself living in a tent on Long Island learning how to grow vegetables on a 5 acre market garden scale. They had 200 shareholders that come to the farm every week and actually harvest their own vegetables for the most part which is a kind of a unique way to run that type of farm but that's another story. Anyway, I fell in love. I found my calling, if you will, quite early on in that experience and decided to drop out of my masters that I had entered into for 5 days and pursued farming. So, I spent another year, a full year, apprenticing at another farm again in New England. At the time, living around Ottawa I wasn't breaking into that world at all. Fate had me enter into this incredible of community of small-scale sort of alternative farmers in New England and I'm really happy that I had that experience.

Down to Massachusetts I went for a full year apprenticeship program - which also, beyond vegetables on a 5 acre scale we also had a bit of livestock. Through that experience I learned that I actually really like raising animals too. Using horsepower came out of that experience. Then I had the opportunity to use an acre. This is the way I work. I don't think too much about what I'm doing and just sort of do things and opportunities come and I just go for it with them. So, opportunity brought me an acre of land to use in Massachusetts and I said 'Let's Go for it!' I had a friend who was changing the structure of his CSA so I also inherited 20 well-trained CSA families to be my shareholders for that season. It was a very easy nurturing way to enter into running my own business.

I had a huge amount of support from people who had a lot more experience than I did. I call *that* experience my masters actually and so will my dad to this day. He considers my post-graduate education the 2 years I spent farming in other places. It's pretty special to me. For someone who grew up in Toronto for the most part and whose dad has been selling nails all his life and he's thinking "Wow. You went to university to go out and farm. That's an interesting choice." You know a lot of people would agree with that and a lot of parents would agree with that. Just because the financial viability of farming and the tough work you know the amount of work and that the people try to stray away from.

So I had that experience but I wanted to come home so I did. I started a CSA called Teamwork CSA with a good friend named Rob Wallbridge. Well, I just met him at the time but he's a good friend now. Farmed with him for a year and that situation didn't work out so I needed to find more land. I had a spiel and the spiel was knowing what I wanted first of all. I wanted to be able to build a greenhouse because up until this point I was able to borrow greenhouse space at the locations I was farming which was very convenient. Access to water, 2 acres of land, and my membership was in Ottawa so I needed to be in a reachable distance to Ottawa too. So, I put my spiel together and at an event here in town the first people I talked to, first round with my spiel was Bruce and Janet Duncan and that was 7 years ago. I have been co-existing I call it with Bruce and Janet on their farm for the past 7 years farming a 2 and a half acre garden. Making a living at it. I've been making a living at it since I was living in Massachusetts to tell you the truth. It was a meager living but I made it work because I was determined. You have to be able to make a living growing food it's just the way it has to work.

The learning process has not stopped by any sense of the imagination. If anything, I grow a mean head of lettuce and I know a lot about growing vegetables by now. The complexity of farming, the complexity of the changes environmentally, you know weather-wise etc. that we are facing,

the complexity of balancing family, farm, money, personal activities such as learning how to sew, which is something I really want to do, all those things just really have emphasized me the learning curve will never stop. Beyond that, what I glean co-existing with Bruce and Janet has been unstructured knowledge about things like fencing, repairing fencing, climbing up ladders that are uncomfortably high. It's those situations where I think that a lot of learning and formal learning comes from pushing yourself into those uncomfortable situations. There is nothing better than having someone there who has been up that ladder before, who has built and repaired that fence a thousand times, who has been through so many experiences that they can calm you down and they can tell you it's going to be alright. So that "WAAAAAA" sort of feeling inside is comforted and from that you learn.

I feel like now I have something to offer. I've had apprentices I guess for 3 years. This year actually she called herself a farm worker, minion. She empowers the term minion. Anyways, it's semantics because she did learn a lot but she didn't want to have that commitment. I have had apprentices who have been very seriously pondering the idea of farming. That's been an interesting learning experience for me also. One, because that puts me in the teacher role, which I hadn't done before so that reaffirms things that I know and don't know. That's an interesting point. Also, it has given me an opportunity to show someone how to use a drill. That's empowering for people. Ya. It's a big thing. You come out of university with a piece a paper. You know how to write an essay and you know ideologically 'I want to be involved in changing the food system and empowering the people' and all these things and you just come out with a passion. It's those simple skills that I think a lot of people take for granted that you have in this room, that we all have in this room, those are the skills that we really need to translate to people that have the passion but don't know how to build the simplest structure or don't know how to repair the simplest thing, don't know how to prioritize or break away from the square system that the non-farm population is raised up in. You wake up, you go to something, you come home from something, you relax for a while, you go to bed, you wake up again and you do it all over again. It's boring but it's secure and that's not farming at all. Farming is not boring and farming is not secure. It takes a lot of work to break that program in somebody and that is something I have learned having apprentices come to the farm and work with me.

The most rewarding thing is seeing the change and seeing the stamina build and seeing the sense of empowerment that comes from people. First of all, leaving something at the end of the day and saying, "Holy cow! Look what I just did today. That's pretty impressive" because that's unique for people also. Anyways, I'm sort of blending the being mentored and the mentoring part because I think that it's a two-way street and that's what I'm trying to say. I think that the face of succession farming is changing. The exchange of knowledge, the passing down of knowledge is changing because not too many farm kids are staying at home to farm anymore and the people that are interested in doing it don't have the natural upbringing or the natural understanding that comes with being brought up in that environment. So, I think that we all first of all have a responsibility to even acknowledge the incredible amount of skills and knowledge that you have to share. In my experience, because I'm a talker and I'm not afraid to approach people and ask questions, I'm not afraid to ask for help, I'm not afraid to take help either so I've talked to quite a few people and I get a sense that people really under-value what they have to offer in the farming community. That is not just an issue here that's everything we are doing here, we are talking about here. I think that's a nucleus of where it all comes from. We have to take pride in ourselves, in what we do and in what we know. Even though it doesn't pay three-bill figure that tells us that we know more than somebody else.

We need a format and I'm a big one about informality but we do need some sort of format for that exchange of knowledge to take place and there's all sorts of really exciting things including this

new campaign. All sorts of projects that are trying to, not even trying there's only do or don't doing I think Yoda said, that's bridging that gap between people with experience and people seeking to gain that experience. Maybe people aren't aware of what's going on but I highly recommend that you keep your ears peeled cause down in Kingston they are doing wonderful stuff, there's this new campaign, there's other organizations, the Heifer Project is involved with quite a few organizations that are really pushing this bridge and I think it's really important. But also, I think just encouraging in your own communities if you see a person that's new from town that looks a little lost and might seem a little green take them under your wing and share something with them. It's a new culture for people. It's a dying culture - the agriculture world. I shouldn't say dying, that's rather pessimistic but we just need to preserve it, embrace it, love it, and pass it on in any way, shape, or form that we can. There you go. Thank you. (applause)

Jon Steinman: This is Deconstructing Dinner and that was Hilary Moore speaking in November 2009 in Ottawa at the National Farmers Union's annual convention. Hilary operates the Teamwork CSA at Dunbrae Farms in Almonte, Ontario. If you've missed any of today's broadcast, it is archived on-line at deconstructingdinner.ca and posted under the January 7th, 2010 episode. Also located on the page will be additional audio of some of the comments made at the convention by delegates who shared some inspiring thoughts on this important topic of young farmers in Canada.

soundbite

Jon Steinman: This is Deconstructing Dinner – a syndicated weekly radio show and podcast produced in Nelson, British Columbia at Kootenay Co-op Radio CJLY. I'm Jon Steinman. Today's 160th episode is archived on-line at deconstructingdinner.ca under the January 7th, 2010 broadcast. The future of new and young farmers and the declining population growing food in Canada was a featured theme at the 2009 Convention of Canada's National Farmers Union, and it was only one year earlier that a keynote speaker at the NFU's annual convention said this, "As the % of people growing food decreases, the political power of farmers decreases." Those words were spoken by Paul Nicholson - Paul is a member of EHNE - the Basque Farmers Union located in the north of Spain and a member of the International Coordinating Committee of La Via Campesina – the International peasant movement of family-farmers, indigenous and landless people. Paul's talk was titled Farmers and the Global Food Crisis and his comments on the diminishing political power of farmers as the number of farmers decreases is a signal to all of us, that the people growing our food and feeding the planet are increasingly losing their voice.

Paul Nicholson believes that as a response new alliances need to be formed between farmers and non-farmers alike in order for growth of export oriented industrial models of food production to be curtailed. Paul Nicholson was recorded in November 2008 at the annual Convention of the National Farmers Union in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan and introducing Paul is a familiar voice to Deconstructing Dinner – farmer Jan Slomp of Rimbey, Alberta.

Jan Slomp: Paul Nicholson is one of the founding members of La Via Campesina. Since 1993 he has played a key leadership role in the international peasant movement and contributed substantially to the development of the concept of food sovereignty. He is the international representative for the Basque Farmers and Ranchers Union in Spain. He is a member of the International Coordinating Commission of La Via Campesina for the European region and he has served 8 years as a member of the board of directors of the Coordination Paysanne European - a member organization of La Via Campesina. He has participated in numerous organizational exchanges with peasant organizations in Africa, Asia and the Americas and is well positioned in the highlights of the differences and similarities in how food sovereignty is being interpreted and

practiced in the international and developing scenes and developing countries. He has given numerous presentations in international gatherings in India, Mexico, Brazil, France, Mali and Italy among other countries and has significant experience in European Agriculture Policy. Paul speaks at least five languages fluently. He is the spoke person for La Via Campesina. Please help me welcome Paul Nicholson. (applause)

Paul Nicholson: Thank you Jan. When I hear those things I do not believe them but still. Well, thank you very much to the Canadian NFU for the invitation to be here. For me it's an honour. It's an honour especially because the Canadian NFU has been an organization which is being very solidarian and which has followed a long process of farmer organizational work, of input and ideas and mobilization. So, thank you very much - Stewart, Terry, Jan, and Kalissa and so many other delegates from Canada NFU who have participated at the international level. For me it's special to recognize the value of Canadian NFU at the international level.

Sixteen years ago there was no family-farm expression at the international level. There was no voice and there was certainly no organized farmers movement at the international level to defend our livelihoods, to defend our values and to defend our way of life. In an unexpected encounter in Nicaragua a dozen farmers from different organizations made a declaration, a statement. It was the first statement in fact, at an international level we have done. There, the president of the NFU, and I remember distinctly, that he coined the expression, 'the need of having a voice as farmers.' He was Wayne Easter. We are going back in history, history is very short but that's still. The president of the Canadian NFU was there and he expressed the need for having a family-farm voice at an international level and since then at every decision making juncture the NFU has been present.

The initial document of food sovereignty was written in a small group of people Nettie Wiebe was there - one of the pens who were writing the document then. If you read it now you will see there the ethical values, the values of family-farmers coming out very clearly - Terry on the issue of seeds, in Rome on the issue the right to food. There have been many historical moments when Canadian farmers have been present and participating not only in conferences but also in uncomfortable times in the mobilization for example against WTO. Canadian NFU has been an active founder, member in the creation and the consolidation of Via Campesina. I think it's useful to see what we've done over the last 15 years because it hasn't been little.

When we started Via Campesina we started not knowing where we were going, how we were going to achieve this family-farm voice but we knew we had to organize. We knew we had to unite family-farmers from all over the world and we had to mobilize this expression in a common strategy. So we developed a strategy against the free trade policies. We understood that the struggle was not between countries, was not between farmers but it was basically against a neo-liberal system which was destroying family-farm, social, cultural, and the environmental structure and economical structure. We decided we needed an autonomous and independent movement - a horizontal movement. Not a vertical federation. What decisions would be taken through a consensus building process. Never through a vote with winners and losers and that we are responsible of ourselves, of our present and of our future. Nobody was going to speak in the name of us.

In the organizational process we have fully incorporated the aspirations of all farmers: men and women, farmers and farm workers, sedentary and nomadic farmers, rich and poor family-farmers, indigenous peoples farmers. We've built a movement - which incorporates all those who fight for other agriculture policies, who fight for a peasant or family-farm, economic, social and cultural structure. We have a very active policy of gender parity and in our last assembly in Maputo we

have men and women launched the campaign against violence against women. Explicating the objective to achieve a more just relationship in our own organizations. Although we're facing a patriarchal society in the rural community I believe that we will win in achieving a more just relationship men and women in our own organizations and in our own families on the farm.

Today, Via Campesina has a membership of 300 million families. It's a vibrant, grass roots, bottom-up movement. Initially it was strong in America and in Europe but today the strength, the political strength, the pneumatic strength is coming from Africa and from Eurasia. It is recognized institutionally as a major political player. In Defao, we have a direct institutional relationship with a director general. In all spaces of debate and the political decision we take part- we don't win yet but we take part. We are on the table stating what is our requirements, what are our strategies. And what has given us this strength internationally is that we are an authentic movement - we are a real, family-farm movement. We do not represent the lobby; we do not represent the interests of the trans-national corporations. We are cohesive and food sovereignty unites us not only as farmers or fisher folk but also social movements, civil citizen movements, urban consumer movements, etc. It's very remarkable that when you hear a Via Campesina statement it can be said by an African farmer, a European farmer, an American farmer, an Asian farmer it's always representing what we are and what we want to believe. We are also respected because we mobilize - we mobilize locally and we mobilize internationally. That is a huge strength.

Without doubt, Via Campesina generates hope and solidarity amongst all farmers. It is the solidarity that comes from the North to the South and from the South to the North, from the rural communities to the urban communities. That is a powerful strength. It empowers a movement capable of having courage of going against the current and saying what it should say because we know we are right. Today, the International Federation of Agriculture Producers, UFAP I think it was mentioned by Stewart before, those gentlemen represent the agro-export model of agriculture and clearly Via Campesina is the movement -which expresses the voice and the mobilization for another policy based on a sustainable family-farm. Today, we have a political opportunity. As Stewart said, the energy crisis, the climatic change crisis, the food crisis, the financial crisis they are all focusing on the same issue. They are all saying the same thing - it's a crisis of policy. It's a systemic crisis and we can say clearly without being called radical that it's a crisis of capitalism. Today the policies which we defend of a sustainable agricultural system which feeds the people, which sustains the planet is the proposition which is going to be of the future. (applause)

It is our political opportunity to say that we must change our policies and the food sovereignty is the solution for famers and all people alike - for it is the family-farms who feed the world. Only 10% of the food produced in the planet is exported from the continent. The rest is produced and consumed and locally. We family-farmers feed the world and we must believe it because it is true. It's all legitimacy, that is our social function - we feed the world. It isn't Wal-Mart's who feed the world they're not the corporations who feed the world. *We* the family-farmers, *we* feed the world.

We need policies that prioritize local markets, producing food with adequate science and technology with another model of agriculture. It is industrial agriculture, the corporate driven agriculture which is creating the climatic crisis and which is generating hunger in the world. In this year, in the year 2008-2009 there are going to be further a 100 million people who go hungry in the world. This is the consequence of the model of development of a model of economy and society, which we have to change. At the same time it is the sustainable family-farm that cools the planet. It is industrial agriculture, which is generating 35% of the gas, which heats the planet. It's not the family-farm model of production, it's the industrial agriculture model of production.

The actual model of production, of consumption, of transport, of trade cause massive damage to the environment, to health and is the main cause of heating on the planet.

We need to develop alliances to radically change these policies. Alliances with social movements, urban movements over the issue of food, over the issue of climate - issues which are vital for the future of society.

Jon Steinman: This is Deconstructing Dinner. You're listening to Paul Nicholson speaking in November 2008 in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan at the annual convention of the National Farmers Union. Paul is a member of EHNE - the Basque Farmers Union located in the north of Spain and a member of the International Coordinating Committee of La Via Campesina - the international peasant movement of family-farmers, indigenous and landless people. Paul's talk was titled, 'Farmers and the Global Food Crisis' and as he continues he shares how farmers are coping with our changing food system in Europe. As it appears, the struggle of farmers here in North America is eerily similar to those abroad.

Paul Nicholson: I guess many of you want to know what is happening in Europe. Well, more-or-less similar to what is happening here I think. We are more diverse, ok, more diverse but the crisis is the same. In Europe every minute one family-farm disappears. Now with the incorporation of Romania, Bulgaria, Poland the crisis is hitting them especially in the east of Europe. Our reality too is the same in the sense that we are 3-4-5% of the population are farmers and our political influence is vastly diminishing. This is another cause for the urgent need of the developing of alliances - of how to develop alliances.

We are now in the middle of a new agriculture policy debate. Were they are debating whether to liberalize totally all the policy instruments we have left. Obviously the milk quota system has been put into question by the main governments and also, they want to follow up on the decoupling of subsidies which has been a disaster for us. To pay farmers for not working is not logical in *any* society, is not legitimate in *any* society and generates from society to world's farmers mistrust when we try and make alliances. We are farmers and we have a function in society. We are not paid for doing nothing.

In Europe, we have developed a new Via Campesina movement. We have incorporated the Dutch cereal organization, Cereal Producers Organization, the main Spanish organization - COAG, the Italian organic producers, the Turkish Farmers Federation and some other smaller organizations into a new organization in Europe which we all the European coordination Via Campesina. We made a common statement of who we are, what we want to defend and what we propose to society. We want agriculture policies, which prioritize the European domestic requirements. We are directly opposed against export subsidies. We cannot legitimize export subsidies in a context without dumping, destroys family-farms all over the world but also in Europe. Cheap food prices in origin for farmers means the breaking up of the family-farm economic structure. We defend a solidarity agricultural policy. Solidarity with its citizens - producing healthy food, local food, solidarity with its famers - maintaining farmers on the land in the whole of Europe, and solidarity with the farmers of the world - not dumping and not destroying other farmers' possibilities or remaining farmers.

We are against decoupling of subsidies. For example, we think that subsidies should go to the work - the maintenance of farming, the maintenance of a good quality food production, diversely in the context of Europe. We are opposing the free trade agreements, the free trade agendas. We are supporting policies for regional markets and local markets. We demand that the technology and the science is diverted towards an agro-ecological model of production - which doesn't mean

an organic mode of production. Of course, we maintain opposition against GMOs. That has been one of our few victories this last year. GMOs are still de facto moratorium, Monsanto (MON 810) is still not legal in Europe and only in certain parts of Spain are GMOs produced. Next year, there are going to be strong mobilization to try and apply the moratorium for GMOs in Spain too. It's clear, it's very clear. European citizens do not want GMOs. They do not want to see it on the field, they do not want to eat it and they do not want to eat animals who eat GMOs - that is very clear. (applause)

The challenges for the future they are similar. This week we have had an extremely interesting seminar on food sovereignty and the whole issue of local food, of local markets, of regional markets, of developing other systems of relationship with urban communities - that is a huge issue for us. We defend an agriculture which focuses its priority on a European requirements - not export, and the role especially of the European Agricultural Policy and the United States Policy in the Farm Bill are destructive to the family-farm context all over the world. Second challenge is the role of the trans-national corporations. It is clear that the corporations are intervening in the policy making decision, the decision making policy arena in the parliaments, in the governments and international institutions. We must dismantle the power of the trans-national corporations. This monopoly situation is destroying not only family-farms but is commodifying all rights and commodifying all relationships between all persons. To dismantle the power of the trans-national corporations *must be* an objective which we have to strategize and see how we can do - not only in one region of the world but perhaps it is to focus on certain trans-national corporations, perhaps it is to focus on decision making procedures but it is very clear that today for example, in the face of the food crisis, what is the proposition of the governments? More trade and more technological packet, more GMOs, second generation, third generation. That is a corporate driven proposition and in face of that what do we do about the food crisis?

There's no answer and the U.N. task force is basically the U.N. plus WTO and the World Bank and these new philanthropic foundations like the Ford, like the Rockefeller, like the Gates Foundation is to carry through the whole technological packet - the whole issue of seed control, patents, the whole agro-industrial model of agriculture. Already we're seeing the whole speculation on land buying, on land grabbing. Governments, trans-national corporations buying land all over the planet to produce energy, the agro-fuels and to produce industrialized food. Key in all this intervention of today, I think, is alliances. We've got to think of how to generate alliances. How to strengthen not only our voices as farmers but with our allies develop propositions, strategies, plans of actions. Over the last ten years we've participated all of us in many social forums. We have had very interesting discussions but it's not enough. We've got to develop actions together. We've got to put our objectives together. We've got to put concrete objectives - we are going to do this and we're going to do this, *this* way. That means we have to identify especially allies who can work with us.

At the international level we are working well with the Women's World March, we are working well especially in some areas with the Friends of the Earth, with some environmental organizations, with urban social movements - on the issues of food, on the issues of climatic change. We've got to develop our capacity, our knowledge of integrating with us allies so that we can bottom-up change these policies. Food sovereignty we are going to obtain from a local-global process. It's not going to be decision making on the top by itself. No, it's going to be a process, which we are going to try to achieve locally, and it will build up and that will be the process where we will start to win spaces, to win capacity to negotiate with governments for changing real policies.

It's strategic for us, I think, especially the NFU of the United States, the Canadian National Farmers Union and the European coordination Via Campesina are capable of working closely together. We have many commonalities and we have many positive things to give to Via Campesina because no doubt the political decisions are being taken these power centres and we have a huge responsibility in these power centres to intervene and to influence the decision-making procedures. Thank you very much. For me it's been a great honour this week and I will take the message back to Europe that together we must change. Thank you. (applause)

Jon Steinman: And that was Paul Nicholson speaking in November 2008 in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan at the annual Convention of the National Farmers Union. Paul is a member of EHNE - the Basque Farmers Union located in the north of Spain and he is a member of the International Coordinating Committee of La Via Campesina – the international peasant movement of family-farmers, indigenous and landless people. Today's episode of Deconstructing Dinner has been archived on-line at deconstructingdinner.ca and posted under the January 7th, 2010 episode.

ending theme

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.

This radio show 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 website at deconstructingdinner.ca or by dialing 250-352-9600.