



**TRANS-PACIFIC
PARTNERSHIP**



It's time to have a conversation with the public about supply management, with the threats from trade deals

Talking about supply management

STANDING AT THE HEAD of the table, I lift my gaze to the 50 dairy farmers gathered in the dining room of an Agassiz farmhouse to talk about supply management and the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Chairs ring the table, a second row lines up against the wall. Long slanting rays of sun spill thru the door and onto the wall beams hewn a century ago.

I think about what I am going to say.

The invitation was to sit down with half a dozen or so farmers to talk about my January WDF column Elephant in the Milking Parlour, reprinted in the April issue of BC Holstein News.

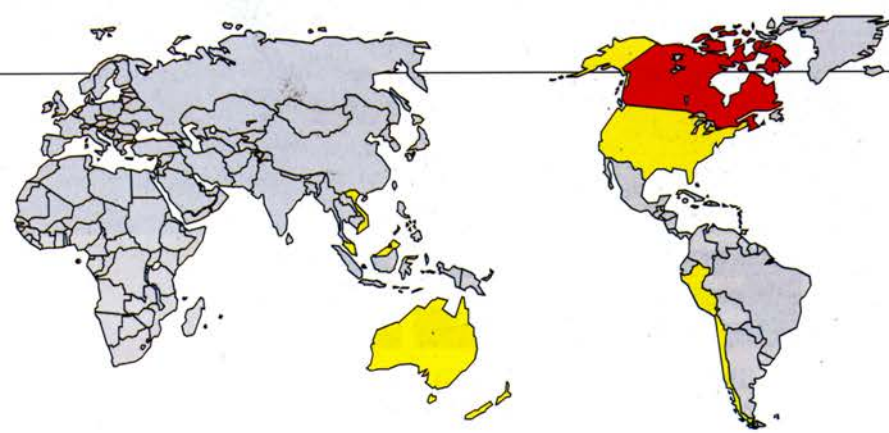
Two days previous, I'd been speaking at the Animal Nutrition Association of Canada's annual meetings in Vancouver. ANAC just completed 6 years of preparatory work leading up to CFIA-led regulatory reform commencing this spring. I suggested their next priority should be to support policy respect for farmers lest their market for feed disappear. I spoke specifically about supply-managed commodities and the TPP.

Senator Larry Campbell was the closing speaker. British Columbians have a lot of respect for Campbell. After a 13-year career with the RCMP – his last eight with the drug squad - Campbell transferred to the coroner's office in 1981 and became BC's chief coroner in 1996. Elected Vancouver's mayor in 2002, Campbell's passion for community inspired prime time Canadian television dramas DaVinci's Inquest and DaVinci's City Hall.

Appointed to the Senate by PM Paul Martin in 2005, Campbell completed his term as mayor before taking his Senate seat. If you want to know more about what he stands for these days, go to www.larrycampbell.ca.

Halfway through remarks that began with a discussion of

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Ottawa's Plan B is individual bilateral arrangements with Asian nations, beginning with India and China. Feelers are out to Japan and Thailand. But you can be sure - as Pacific nations come together to offset the economic power of an emergent China - that Ottawa sees the TPP as it's biggest power play.

Japan - also knocking on the TPP clubhouse door - has long protected its domestic farmers and fishermen. According to The Japan Times, TPP opponents argue the elimination of high tariffs for rice, starch, beans and other food products would spell the end of the nations' primary industries. By provoking cheap imports, they argue the TPP would cause Japan's calorie-based self-sufficiency rate for food to drop from 39 per cent to 14 per cent, raising food security risks.

According to Masahiro Kawai, former head of Japan's Finance Ministry's Policy Research Institute and now top economist at the Asian Development Bank Institute, the TPP offers the opportunity for sweeping reforms of Japan's agricultural sector.

Farmers "need to become internationally competitive and management minded" he argues, noting many farmers in Japan are "too old, too small-scale and not motivated enough" to increase productivity.

In the Agassiz dining room, the front seats finally fill and the room grows quiet. I began with Senator Campbell's warning: it's would appear it is not a matter of if, but when...

In it's 2009 study, Price Waterhouse found supply management produces significant economic impacts for British Columbia, contributes additional long term economic benefits to the province, and supports families and rural communities throughout B.C. Time to bring it to the national level and include all Canadians in the discussion. **Ⓢ**

strict rules for "new members", Canada and US negotiators are now working on a pre-agreement to elicit Americans' support for Canada's entry.

Before a new member is admitted, all nine current members must agree. Nations opposing Canada's entry into the TPP - principally New Zealand and the United States - say Canada should not join the negotiations until we first abandon our long standing commitment to supply management for Canada's milk, chicken, egg, turkey and hatching egg producers.

Canadian officials reply Ottawa is prepared to put everything on the table, but only after Canada actually gets admitted to the TPP table.

Washington's 2012 Trade Policy Agenda says this about that: "...the United States continues to make clear that any new participants must be able to meet the high standards agreed by all TPP negotiating partners and be prepared to address specific issues of concern."

We don't have many cards to play. The US already has unfettered access to most sectors of Canada's economy and resources under the NAFTA. Washington has little incentive to support our entry into the TPP unless more is put on the table. And right up there on their wish list along with the elimination of foreign investment in banks, telecommunication firms, cultural industries and airlines is restrictions is market access for poultry, eggs and milk.

ANAC's successful collaboration with government on CFIA's regulatory reform, Campbell asked ANAC members what strategies they were considering to adjust to a marketplace without supply management.

A supporter of supply management, Campbell nonetheless felt the writing was on the wall and warned ANAC members "...you need to engage with government now and be part of the discussions. Will it be phased out over 10 years? Doubtful that long... Whatever it is, your sector needs to plan for it. It's a big part of your market. You need to talk to government and get your interests on the table."

When former cop-coroner Campbell is worried, I worry. And so should farmers.

Emerging April 3 from the "Three Amigos" Summit (Harper, Obama, Calderone) in Washington, Harper told reporters Obama continues to "welcome" Canada's "interest" (along with that of Japan and Mexico) in joining the TPP - a nine-nation Asia-Pacific free trade proposal being negotiated between the United States, Australia, Brunei, Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam.

Today's member countries represent one quarter of the world's GDP. If Canada, Japan and Mexico become members, the new 12 nation consortia will represent one third of global GDP. The TPP is considered the precursor to an even larger Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific.

While existing TPP members draw up