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Subject: to the editor Western Producer
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After watching the proceedings around the ever contentious Wheat Board issues, I'm coming to the conclusion that agriculture related corporations' concentrated control over primary producers has taken us very close to the point of no return, exacerbated by big Govt.'s seeming inability to restrain the 800 pound gorilla that every producer is grappling with. I have struggled with my conscience as to speaking out on the Wheat Board issue since August, when Wendy Holm was obviously ousted by a threatening phone call from Min. Strahls' office. I have become acquainted with Ms. Holm over a good many issues in the beef industry, and what jumped out at me in the case of her removal as a columnist for the Producer was just how much clout some of our govt. ministries think they have, and obviously at times do have. Any time I asked for Wendy Holm's help researching issues or even just her opinion, she was obviously genuinely concerned only with the well being of agriculture at the "family farm level", the only conclusion one could draw after reading her columns in the Producer. I discussed with her the underhanded way she was dismissed from connecting with farmers accross this country and her reaction was "this is not about me, this is about farmers and their rights". Feelings aside, it was underhanded for a Govt. office to muscle one of the foremost agriculture publications in Canada to curtail her writings on behalf of those farmers not in favour of seeing the Wheat Board revamped with no producer plebiscite, if that's what their intent is. If that is not their intent, what threat then could Wendy Holm possibly pose in asking pointed questions at a public meeting?

Where I struggle a bit with my conscience in commenting on the Wheat Board issue, is that I admit I'm not the most knowledgable soul in terms of all the in's and out's of the Wheat Board, as I'm mainly in the beef end of agriculture. What does jump out at me loud and clear, however, is that the main thrust behind the "kill the Wheat Board" movement is the US, the European Union, and most damning of all, the multi - national corporations that allready are strangling profit margins for the primary producer. Seems to me that the reason for the inception of the Wheat Board was because of the vagaries that large grain buying interests lorded over the producing farmers. Look no farther than the concentrated control that three packers to this day hold over the Cdn. beef industry and imagine how fast the grain industry will wake up to the realities of the "freedom of choice". We've sucked into the "bigger is better" line for twenty years now, and all we hear about is depressed prices in all farm commodities. Looks to me like the Wheat Board just may be the last bastion of protection this countries grain farmers have, it behooves us to be damn carefull what we wish for. Anytime you think dealing on your own with a multi - national corporation is desirable, you just bent over. And if the way both Cdn federal govt.'s have dealt with BSE is any indication of what we can expect from changes to the Wheat Board, we probably don't need to expect much in the way of improved farm gate profit as a result. Apathy is taken as assent, unless you make some noise, don't cry after the fact, and don't think that individual voices are not heard.

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