



The National Farmers' Union of Canada has been conducting a boycott of the products of Kraft Corporation since late this summer. The boycott has since been reduced to products from Kraft's main non-unionized plants and does not include unionized subsidiaries such as Sealtest.

The boycott is being conducted as an effort by farmers, in this case dairy farmers, to gain collective bargaining rights and establish their right to have some control of their products; as opposed to having food controlled by large corporate interests like Kraft.

The boycott has meant demonstrations at Kraft plants and various grocery chains across the country. It also is a campaign directed at reaching and communicating with the urban population of Canada to try and get support for their struggle which deals with needs common to everybody (whether they be from urban or rural milieus) — the production and distribution of food.

The following is an interview with the national boycott co-ordinator for the NFU, Don Kossick:

CUP: Why do farmers want to boycott Kraft?
KOSSICK: To understand that, you have to have a background on what has been going on in rural Canada. To try and put it as straight as possible, farmers at the moment in Canada are powerless in any decisions that are being made in what happens in agriculture.

For example, they have no control over the price of their products, can't establish any price on that product. The price is established by Agro-business rather than themselves.

Agro-business are those involved in the marketing and processing of food. They control the prices, and the farmer has to take what they put forward. Because of that we

have over 2/3 of the farmers geared up to be forced off the land in the next 10 to 15 years. We are losing a thousand farmers a month right now. The average age of the farmer is 58 years.

I would like to point out that since farmers have no control over their product, they also have no control over government policy, because it is government that decides what happens to food. They decide how it is marketed and produced. This is done in league with Agro-business corporations.

From that situation, farmers have been trying to organize to create a situation where they can have some say over what happens to their product, and essentially what happens to the economic situation of their land and what comes back to them at the farm level. More specifically, farmers and the farm population have no control over government policy which decides what is going to happen to agriculture in the next 10 or 15 years, and they have no control at all over their product. . . This means the prices that they get for that product. In a situation like this the farmer will obviously have a low income and a great possibility of being thrown off the land. The point is, are we going to do anything about it?

Well, now farmers are starting to do something about it and that is why we are having the Kraft boycott.

Dairymen in Ontario took a very conscious decision that in order to stabilize their income and to have some kind of security for the next 10 to 15 years, they must have some control over their product and some control over agriculture. The two main groups that they have to deal with are the Government which makes the policy, and the corporation which establishes the price and the marketing condition.

The reason that we are boycotting Kraft then, is to be able to sit down and tell Kraft what we want for our product and how we want to see the pricing and marketing of that product handled. What we want is a situation where we can decide, as farmers, the terms and conditions under which food is produced, processed and marketed. That is essentially the fight we are in.

The boycott means very simply that we're putting the pressure on Kraft so that we can, in fact, sit down with them and determine those conditions. Right now they have no

recognition of farmers, and they have no belief in the farmers right to do that, so somehow our first step is to establish that right. That is the frame work of our boycott of Kraft. If we can make a breakthrough with Kraft, then we are in effect making a breakthrough with government and other Agro-business corporations. Once that is done a precedent is set for dealing with government and National Grain or any other business that is involved as Agro-business; McCains for example, in the Maritimes.

CUP: But why Kraft? Why not either take on all of the companies, or another company, or go into something like a milk-withholding action? Why a boycott of the Kraft Corporation?

KOSSICK: Kraft is a company that the dairymen have had to work with and recognize as a price-setter, and an organization which really does control markets and especially dairy. Kraft is the largest dairy monopoly in North America and it is very strong in Ontario. Ontario is a place where dairymen have been working very hard to establish some kind of situation where they can bargain collectively. Kraft is the biggest in the field and they took Kraft on.

They could have taken on a large number of Agro-businesses across the country at the same time, but in terms of resources, finance and strength, you can be much more effective concentrating on one group. Kraft has been more blatant in some ways in terms of controlling the dairy industry in Ontario. For example, there used to be 500 cheese factories in Ontario; now there are only 42.

Part of the process has been that Kraft has had a situation where they control the Ontario Milk Marketing Board. By control I mean that they can have the Milk Marketing Board administer quotas in such a way that the quotas get passed on to groups like Kraft and away from co-operative cheese factories which in a lot of ways helped out the farmer more than a large corporation like Kraft. So Kraft is very intent on establishing a situation where they control dairy from the farm level right to the supermarket level.

We are taking them on because they are the ones that are leading the way in that type of process. If we don't stop them we don't stop anybody. They are the Big Daddies. So our strategy has been to take on Kraft in Ontario where the base of dairymen is. By winning the right to collective bargaining with Kraft, the trend setter in the dairy industry, we feel that we will be making a big breakthrough.

CUP: How do you intend to develop your Kraft boycott? Are you working across Canada or regionally?

KOSSICK: Why a strategy such as a boycott in the first place? We feel that the production

of food, the use of food, and not only to the farmers' population of Canada. It is people in Canada to be able food at a price that they can such a price that both the p it and the person who is benefit.

It was in this light that a boycott. We feel that having economic sledgehammer of a boycott, we get a chance to and other groups about wh do and why we are doing it, happened often, when ce tried to secure certain right establishment has done a isolating them so that they who are only in there for it not for the good of anybody through a boycott, we can't to consumers and other gr intend to produce food of go good price so that both we they get what they need.

Through the boycott, we go into cities and talk to the pe really going on in rural Ca to understand that there ne between both groups. We fe positive than dumping mi milk. Those tactics of wa would not win support consumers.

When Kraft has millions control the media, obvious up the wasting of food and consumer and farmer at ea Part of our problem is th paying very high prices for the farmer is getting extren his production. Consumers prices they pay are becau when actually you have Kra off in the middle ground suser and the producer and that.

We are trying to expose what they are doing as part business structure in Canad boycott is the most effective and that's what is going powerful corporations like

We are intending to do sumers by hitting certain Ontario and eventually rig At these various centres Sarnia, Cornwall and la Edmonton, Moose Jaw, Cha going into the supermarket to explain that farmers ar right of collective bargai themselves and for their pr

