

ecfwa

Eastern Canada Farm Writers' Association

Summer 2002

the nib

Need-to-know news

Food for thought served up at ECFWA luncheon

Joe Callahan, Loyalist College journalism professor with a special interest in agriculture, spoke at the ECFWA 2002 annual meeting, held in April at the Arboretum Centre, University of Guelph. Joe opened participants' eyes when he waded into sensitive territory. Here's an excerpt from his presentation.

I'd like to make a simplistic suggestion – that you work for the audiences/communities that read your stuff...and that you tell them what they need to hear not what they want to hear...the cold hard facts.

What does that mean to an ag journalist working for an ag audience? What does it mean to a mainstream journalist covering the ag sector for a non-agriculture audience? What does it mean to a PR or media relations person working for a large ag seed, fertilizer or equipment manufacturer or distributor? What does it mean to the local agriculture federation newsletter editor...or secretary?

It means the same thing. Your

audiences deserve and I hope demand the same thing, credible, fact-based stories and information which will help them make important decisions about their lives.

“In order to advance the public image of the farmer and the agriculture industry, we must establish credibility with the audiences of mainstream media.”

At Loyalist College my colleagues and I embarked on an online project last fall called Issues in Agriculture; the Sustainability of the Family Farm and as part of our research, we interviewed Senator Jack Wiebe, chair of the Senate sub-committee on Agriculture and he said that farmers in Canada need a common voice.

Journalists have a long history in providing a voice for those who have been marginalized.

Yes I said marginalized, can it be that those who feed the nation are

marginalized. Well, let's define marginalized – “pertaining to the fringe of consciousness.”

If mainstream media is representative of a nation's consciousness, then Canadians are unconscious when it comes to farming and the agriculture industry. Maybe a few more tragedies like Walkerton will move farmers from the fringe of consciousness. When society is looking for a scapegoat.

Maybe the economy of a continent needs to be threatened as with hoof and mouth disease in order to move farmers from the fringe of consciousness.

These stories are sensational...and sell newspapers...that's when farming moves outside of the fringe of consciousness.

Former ag minister Eugene Whelan said that nobody was training people to cover agriculture. That's no longer true. Farm writers' organiza-

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We found the Constitution. Now, we're changing it.

We figured it was time. Untouched since 1966, the ECFWA Constitution needs a little nip and tuck. We need your input. You'll find a copy at www.cfwf.ca (look under "ECFWA"). Send your comments/suggestions for revitalization by October 31, 2002 to btobin@adculture.com We'll present the final recommended amendments at the 2003 ECFWA annual meeting. For a hard copy, call Bernard Tobin at (905) 875-3070.

Prez Sez...

Andrew Douglas
ECFWA President

As the ECFWA executive steers the association through the next year, we'll be doing so without some very important crew members on board.

Owen Roberts, long time ECFWA director, is taking a well-deserved rest from the executive, although he's assured me that his sound counsel is only a phone call away. He's not the only director who's taking a break from the executive. Barry MacCormack, Doug Peebles, Heather Rand, Terry Boland, Liz McClung and Gary Lannin are all stepping aside to make room for some new faces. The executive that's leaving served the ECFWA well. Thanks for your hard work.

New blood brings new ideas and we will be meeting this summer to chart a course for the ECFWA through 2003. We already have a full calendar. At the top of our list of to dos is planning the winter training seminars. The seminars have been well attended since they started two years ago. Stay tuned in the fall for details on next year's seminar dates and topics.



Another event that should become a regular stop on the ECFWA calendar is the summer bus tour. Bernard Tobin is leading the planning team that will be resurrecting the summer tour after a 10-year hiatus.

Details are still being hammered down but we'll use a luxury tour coach to whisk us around the shores of Lake Huron and Georgian Bay as we visit agricultural newsmakers and stay overnight in splendid accommodations in Ontario's West Coast country. The Agricultural Adaptation Council has generously offered to pay for the bus. We'll give you details soon. In the meantime, mark August 15-16 on your calendars.

And of course, there's the CFWF annual conference in Fredericton, September 12-14.

All in all there's already a lot planned for 2003. Please contact any of the new ECFWA directors with ideas for other events or issues you'd like to see us tackle.

Andrew Douglas
Associate Editor
Country Guide Magazine

Welcome 2002/2003 ECFWA executive

President – Andrew Douglas, *Country Guide*
1st Vice-President – Bernard Tobin, *AdCulture Group*
2nd Vice-President – John Greig, *Ontario Farmer*
Secretary-Treasurer – Karen Lewis, *AdCulture Group*
Newsletter Editor – Jane Robinson, *Kahntact Marketing*

Directors:

Frances Anderson, *Ontario Farmer*
John Beardsley, *CKNX Radio*
Chrystal Boudreau, *Fleishman-Hillard*
Carol Pilley, *Ginty Jocius & Associates*
Lilian Schaer, *Ontario Pork*

Coming events

July 19

CFWF Awards Entry Deadline

Get your material postmarked by July 19, 2002.

Info: jane.robinson@kahntact.com

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August 15-16

ECFWA Bus Tour

Lake Huron/Georgian Bay area

Info: btobin@adculture.com

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September 10 • 9:30 AM

Farm Writer Breakfast (FREE!)

Canada's Outdoor Farm Show

Woodstock, ON

Watch the listserv for the location

Info: carol@gintyjocius.com

•••

September 12-14

CFWF Conference

Fredericton, NB

Info: jonesh@fundygroup.ns.ca

enter your name in \$500 for Fredericton draw – details below

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\$500 for Fredericton

Every year about this time, we solicit entries for a draw for \$500 towards airfare/hotel/registration costs for the CFWF annual. We're looking for members whose employers (may be one and the same) can't cover the whole cost of the trip. E-mail Andrew Douglas (adouglas@fbc.agricoreunited.com) by July 31 if you want your name in the hat.

2002 membership \$\$ due

If you haven't renewed your membership for 2002/2003 (last year's expired April 30/02) now's the time. Registration forms are available online at www.cfwf.ca – or contact secretary-treasurer Karen Lewis directly at klewis@adculture.com We've extended the "late dues" period – so \$40 will do it if you renew by July 30, 2002.

Farmers' Independent Weekly

New western weekly hits the sideroads

When any new agricultural publication hits the streets it's big news in the Canadian ag communications community. In mid June Canada welcomed its newest weekly agricultural publication, led by publisher and editor John Morriss.

The new weekly publication's reporting and editorial staff include experienced and award-winning journalists Allan Dawson, Laura Rance and Lorraine Stevenson.

"We believe there is a viable market for a news, analysis and advertising package that has a clear focus on Manitoba farmers," said Morriss.

Morriss said the new tabloid will feature farming news and rural views for all farmers, regardless of their scale, their type of operation or their farming philosophy.

"Whether they are big or small,

conventional or organic, full-time or part-time; whether they grow livestock or crops, we intend to meet farmers' needs for news, opinion and information," he said. "That means covering more than the business side of farming and more than the agricultural side of rural life. Farming is a lifestyle too."

Morriss said the newspaper's owners believe there is a greater need than ever for a farm information medium that is independent of agribusiness owners. "Our objective will be to ensure that as much knowledge as possible – and therefore maximum profit – stays in the hands of farmers."

For more information, contact:
John Morriss, editor/publisher
Farmers' Independent Weekly
Telephone: (204) 235-0932
Fax: (204) 452-3423
www.fiwonline.com

Centre for Rural Leadership launched

Responding to a need for leaders in rural Ontario, the Centre for Rural Leadership is a new organization designed to offer agricultural and rural leadership programming.

"I see the Centre as becoming a world-renowned resource for leadership information and opportunities," says Christine Dukelow, president of the new Centre, and rural secretariat director with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food. "This will involve a combination of providing educational programs and partnering with others in the leadership sector in order to offer something for everyone, be they youth, adults, businesses or organizations."

"This is a critical step in strengthening the profile of leadership in Ontario and building a stronger foundation for future programming and partnerships," says Art Stirling, vice-president of the Centre and government and industry affairs manager with Pioneer Hi-Bred Limited.

The concept of the Centre arose from the Agricultural Leadership Trust's, the board responsible for the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program (AALP), desire to build a long-term, stable foundation for the AALP – one of the longest-running, most successful agricultural leadership development programs in the world.

RANT continued from page one

tions like this one, journalism programs like ours at Loyalist are making a difference. But we can't make agriculture sexy! It's rarely dynamic. It doesn't sell. Is it that the image of the farmer is difficult to "sell" – why should the image of an essential service have to be sold?!

Farmers need good PR, but I'm one of those rare people who believe that good PR and good journalism are not mutually exclusive. But in order for that to be true we have to establish and maintain credibility with our audiences and our editors. Give them what they NEED to know about, not what they want to know about.

In order to advance the public image of the farmer and the agriculture industry we must establish credibility with the audiences of mainstream media. We must hold farmers and the agriculture industry accountable in order to maintain that credibility. A strong agriculture press is crucial but it serves a different purpose...we don't need to preach to the converted, indeed the preachers. We need to venture into the wilderness of an ignorant society and tell them what they need to know...not what they want to know about agriculture.

As farm writers regardless of the stripe, it's not about who we work for, it's about what we work for. This is the work of a lifetime. generations, heritage – yours and mine, the farmers and the industry we write about. More importantly, the audience that we serve and that the farmers feed.

Threaten our universal health care and Canadians scream no no! Threaten a Canadian grown food supply and Canadians say "it's cheaper from the U.S. anyway."

We've got some work to do...let's get to the fields.

...Niblets...

ECFWA Life Member **George Price** passed away May 23, 2002 in Ottawa at age 77. Our thoughts go to his wife Esther. Condolences, donations (Canadian Cancer Society) or tributes can be made online at www.tubmanfuneralhomes.com

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John Muggeridge is headed to Ottawa with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. He can be reached at muggeridgej@em.agr.ca

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ECFWA Life Member **Dr. George Atkins** was named 2002 Alumnus of Honour by the University of Guelph Alumni Association. Congratulations George. (See story at right.)

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More Life Member news: **Clyde Bell** writes that he's completed a comparative economic survey of the village of Tweed (1964-2001) with retired school principal Clive Kingston. Tweed, along with Usborne and Carden, are the three southern Ontario communities taking part in the New Rural Economy Research Project – one of 32 sites from Newfoundland to British Columbia. In Ontario, the program is known as the Sustainable Rural Communities Research Project, University of Guelph. Clyde reports that their Tweed report was voluntary and was designed to indicate the social and economic changes in Tweed during the last 37 years.

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DCFRN: connecting the globe

Imagine a radio network with 440 million listeners – more than the combined population of North America. Now imagine that those listeners live in rural communities across Africa, Asia, South America and the Caribbean.

The Developing Countries Farm Radio Network (DCFRN) has educated radio listeners in developing countries since 1979, establishing itself as the leading rural radio network for farmers. From Nepal to Nigeria, DCFRN aids farmers by broadcasting practical information on topics like food security, food storage and the rights of farm women.

Dr. George Atkins, a veteran Canadian farm radio broadcaster, founded DCFRN following a trip to Zambia in 1975. Radio was then and remains the main means of outside contact for people living in rural areas across the developing world. However, farmers in developing countries were being told about expensive fertilizer and equipment they would probably never own, when around the corner in neighbouring communities there was practical information about farming and nutrition practices that could be shared.

This dilemma gave Atkins the idea to share practical farming tips through a radio network. DCFRN started with 34 members in 26 countries who sent their ideas to DCFRN's office in Toronto where they were developed into scripts and mailed to all participants.

Today, DCFRN has over 600 members and 500 partner stations in 70 countries. The script sharing process has evolved but the basic principle of sharing practical farming tips remains the same. There is no fee or membership, participants must simply share their ideas through the network.

DCFRN is also moving into broadcaster education. It now dedicates resources to assisting broadcasters develop their skills and intends to partner with other organizations to hold international workshops and use the Internet for training and distribution of materials.

It is this forward looking thinking that will take DCFRN into the future and, while the growth is impressive, what is still most important is the message DCFRN sends – the simple idea of one farmer helping another.

Written by Sarah Andrewes – communications consultant at Fleishman-Hillard Canada and granddaughter of DCFRN founder, Dr. George Atkins. Owen Roberts, former ECFWA director, serves on the DCFRN board.



DCFRN Founder Dr. George Atkins

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Please submit information to the editor:
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Check out the CFWF web site at www.cfwf.ca

ECFWA 2002/2003 Executive

President • Andrew Douglas
1st Vice-President • Bernard Tobin
2nd Vice-President • John Greig
Secretary-Treasurer • Karen Lewis
Newsletter Editor • Jane Robinson

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