

“Just Think”

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Barley threat averted!

Thank goodness! Barley Freedom Day, August 1, came and went, but barley farmers are still legally forbidden from selling their crops as they see fit. A brilliant ruling by a wise and discerning judge has kept these dangerous ideologues in shackles for at least a little while longer.

Freedom of marketing choice for grain farmers in Western Canada (a freedom already enjoyed by those apparently more intelligent and responsible farmers in Ontario and Quebec) was a fundamental plank of the Conservative Party in the last election. On voting day, Western Canadians elected more Tory Members of Parliament than all the other parties combined, and they swept the farm ridings. Sheer coincidence!

Liberating barley marketing from the grip of the Wheat Board's "single desk" also seemed to be the expressed and overwhelming choice of farmers who participated in a government plebiscite earlier this year. But don't be misled. Having three options on the ballot made it too difficult for those poor, illiterate farmers to understand what they were voting for. After all, if farmers are too dumb to market their own grain, how can they be expected to vote responsibly?

Apparently, little democratic exercises like elections and plebiscites mean nothing to smart judges who want to protect farmers from their own stupidity. Just produce the grain, you dummies, and let someone else handle the marketing. Maybe you buy the seed, plant it, grow it, and harvest the grain, but that doesn't mean you actually own it and can dispose of it as you see fit.

The directors of the Canadian Wheat Board must be feeling especially offended. After all they've done for grain farmers, why would those ungrateful wretches want to have any control over how their grain is marketed? Farmers can't think for themselves. Just as parents know better than children what's good for them, Wheat Board directors know better than farmers what's good for them. Sometimes you have to spank (or jail) the little upstarts to keep them in line, but hey, we can't risk allowing them to use their own judgement.

After all, what would happen if some enterprising farmers went out and got a better deal for their grain than the Wheat Board offers? Why, the whole wonderful system might collapse! We don't want the go-getters to do better than the lazy ones, nor is it fair for those who modernize to get ahead of the ones who can't be bothered.

True, a big majority of farmers voted for marketing freedom, but they're just selfish. They're only interested in providing a better life for their families, or in passing on a stronger farming operation to their heirs. Instead, they should sacrifice such petty, personal interests in order that their less efficient, less motivated, and less competent fellow farmers can continue to coast.

The surest route to equality is simply to prevent anyone from getting ahead, to hobble the energetic while subsidizing the indolent. Legislate mediocrity, I say! That way, no one's feelings will get hurt. It's the Canadian way.

It's reassuring to know that neither a vote by farmers nor the election of a new government can stand in the way of preventing western grain farmers from securing the same rights that are exercised by virtually all other businessmen. Thanks to the unceasing efforts of the bureaucrats at the Canadian Wheat Board, aided and abetted by a brilliant and progressive judge, we can all sleep a little more soundly tonight. The terrifying threat of marketing freedom for western barley farmers has mercifully been postponed.