

Historical Snapshot

January 27, 1936 - Representatives of Ontario's farm groups held a meeting at the Royal York Hotel in Toronto to establish a provincial brand of the Canadian Chamber of Agriculture. The new organization was named the Ontario Agricultural Conference. The first chairman was Herbert H. Hannam. Marketing policy issues was identified as a top priority.

1937 - The name was officially changed to the Ontario Chamber of Agriculture

1939 - The Ontario Chamber of Agriculture amended its constitution to allow for the admission of County Chambers of Agriculture as members. Peterborough County became the first County Chamber of Agriculture.

1940 - The name was officially changed to the Ontario Federation of Agriculture

1941 - The Ontario Federation of Agriculture hires permanent staff. Up until this point, it was strictly a volunteer organization.

Renfrew County Federation of Agriculture History starting in 1941

by Maynard van der Galien

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) celebrated their 80th anniversary in 2016. There were mergers and many challenges along the way so you could say it's been a bit of a difficult intermix union, uh federation.

This general farm organization was established in 1936 as the Ontario Chamber of Agriculture. It was founded by the United Farmers of Ontario, the United Farmers' Co-operative Company Ltd., and various growers and other agricultural organizations as a non-partisan lobbying and marketing organization for farmers.

In 1939 the Ontario Chamber of Agriculture amended its constitution to admit county chapters of agriculture as members. In 1940 The Women's Institute of Ontario and the United Farm Women of Ontario become members. The name was then changed to the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. In 1943, the UFO dissolved and its remnants were absorbed by the OFA.

The OFA comprises 52 county farm organizations from across the province. Many of these county federations have recently or are now celebrating their 75th anniversary.

Renfrew County Federation of Agriculture celebrated their 75th anniversary in 2016. I have been reading through the first Minute Book that begins in 1941 and goes to 1960 to read about the early history of the local federation. There are over 300 large pages filled

with handwritten minutes. It's a good thing I'm a history buff as it's slow reading --much of the handwriting is hard to decipher.

On October 10, 1941 a group of positive-minded farmers got together in the office of the Department of Agriculture in Renfrew to establish the Renfrew County chapter of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. The elected board consisted of 10 men and a woman as secretary. The board represented most farming areas of the county, including the hilly area of Brudenall.

FIRST DIRECTORS: The Minutes read that Sam McLaren of Cobden took the chair for the opening proceedings. Nat Lindsay of Renfrew acted as chairman for election of officers. Election results were as follows:

President: Garfield Richardson of Burnstown.

First V.P.: Stanley Hunt of Pembroke,

Second V.P.: Sam McLaren of Cobden,

Secretary: Mrs W.H. Hamilton of Glasgow,

Treasurer: Crawford Dewar of Glasgow.

Directors: Mrs. Gordon Hamilton of Pembroke, Hugh Costello of Brudenell, Ray Forrest of Douglas and Thomas Mullin of Eganville.

Alex Jamieson and Duncan Campbell, also members of the agricultural committee, were appointed to the standing committee of the Federation.

At this first meeting a motion was made and supported that 5-cents a mile be paid any member asked to attend meetings. A discussion was held on purchasing a typewriter to be property of the organization. But that didn't happen until 1954 when a typewriter was purchased. The meeting adjourned at 11 p.m.

The 1st Annual Meeting was held in Cobden on Dec. 10, 1942. President Richardson attends the OFA annual meeting in Toronto. Ralph Staples is the fieldman for OFA.

Ray Forrest, who farmed on the Barr Line, his name comes up all though the Minute Book. He was very active in the organization. When doing some other research I saw he was awarded the Ontario Championship for malting barley, by judges of the Ottawa Valley Seed Fair in 1950. The event was held in Pembroke on March 30, 1950. A Foresters Fall farmer, Clayton Vailiant won the same award the previous year at the Royal Ottawa Fair. It brought a \$30.00 cash award.

Odds and Ends The 2nd Annual Meeting was held in Renfrew Trinity Hall. Guest speaker was H.H. Hannam, president of the Canadian Fed. Of Agriculture, who was also guest speaker at the annual meeting in 1946.

The 3rd Annual Meeting was held in the Eganville Town Hall on Oct. 26, 1944. The guest speaker was Alex McKenney, OFA President. Nov. 1944, Ray Forrest becomes president.

4th Annual meeting was held in Cobden.

5th Annual Meeting held on Oct. 29 1946 in Trinity Hall Renfrew. Ray Forrest wants to retire as President. Andy Johnston (Bob's father) appointed President

In 1947, CHOV Radio in Pembroke promised power enough to cover the entire Renfrew County.

Annual meetings were held in Cobden usually early in November. Attendance in 1947 to 1952 was around 130 people. In 1954, 154 people came to the annual meeting
In 1951 directors get 7-cents a mile to attend meetings.

In 1952 Sec/Treas Duncan McLaren is paid \$150 a year.

Aug. 1953 -M.M. Legault, fieldman for eastern Ont. gave report—the total 1953 grant sent to OFA was \$1200.00.

Feb. 1954: A motion is made and moved that the secretary/treasurer be given permission to purchase a typewriter. ---Carried.

Beef Producer Committee in the County established on Dec. 22, 1954, composed of JL Hodgins, Russel Kirk and RM MacGregor.

May 1956 "Surplus is the bug in our economy," Mr. Rentoul of the Hog Producers Marketing told federation directors. He said in eastern Canada there had been an increase of 22% over last year.

Nov. 20, 1957 -The first regular meeting of the newly formed Renfrew County Beef Producers Association was held in the Ag. Office with chairman Russel Kirk presiding. The Federation was asked for money to finance the New Beef Association.

Jan. 14, 1958 -Ray Cunningham, OFA zone fieldman was called in by secretary to assist directors --info needed to carry out the wheat vote which was to take place on Jan. 17 at Duncan McLaren's farm and on Jan. 20 at the Ag Office

Until 1970 the OFA was a true federation. Membership consisted of almost all commodity associations and a number of co-operatives including the United Co-operatives of Ontario (UCO). In addition, the county and township federations were indirectly represented on the board of the OFA through five zone federations. There was no direct farm membership. As a means of establishing closer communications with individual farmers the OFA sponsored the Farm Forum which encouraged small group discussions of the National Farm Radio broadcasts.

The Radio Forum is mentioned many times in the Federation's Minute Book. The Canadian National Farm Radio Forum was launched in January 1941 as an innovative partnership among three newly-formed organizations: the Canadian Association for Adult Education (CAAE), the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA). During the winter months from 1941 to 1965, the Farm Radio Forum supplemented weekly radio broadcasts for the casual listener with printed educational materials that were mailed in advance to registered rural discussion forums. Views of the various forums were fed back to OFA head office for use in the federation's policies and programs. At its peak in 1949, it consisted of over 1,600 registered Forums, with over 21,000 registered individuals listening to a single broadcast nationwide. The Farm Radio Forum ended in Canada in 1965.

In 1964 an Amalgamation Committee was formed to consider the merging of the OFA and the National Farmers Union in Ontario. I'm sure some of our older farmers can recall the GFO plebiscite of 1969 -for a single general farm organization.

BIG MARCH TO PARLIAMENT HILL Close to 20,000 farmers came together on May 24, 1967 and marched on Parliament Hill which led to a groundswell of concern for creation of a single farm organization at the 1967 OFA convention.

At the 1968 OFA convention, a committee report recommends that the agriculture minister “conduct a producer vote by February, 1969, requiring a 51 per cent majority of those voting to favour establishment of The One Farm Organization and a compulsory producer check-off on all farm products, produced and sold in Ontario to finance The One Farm Organization.”

The provincial government passed Bill 140, An Act to Provide for the Establishment, upon an Opinion Poll by Secret Ballot of the Farmers in Ontario, of a General Farm Organization, which specified that at least 60 per cent of the farmers voting had to be in favour in order for the establishment of a General Farm Organization to take place as specified. It wasn't long after the submission of the six-man report that the opposing forces began to organize, focusing on whether separate commodity organizations would exist within the GFO or whether their functions would be transferred to a commodity department of the new organization. General consensus seemed to be that this matter should be dealt with in the voting in order to get a producer opinion.

By voting day, there was a major move opposing the GFO, including agribusiness interests taking out advertisements, and the posting of NO posters on voting day. Voting day people stayed away in droves and the majority of those who voted were against the establishment of the proposed General Farm Organization. Of the 91,653 ballots cast, 43.3 per cent voting “yes” and 55.2 per cent voting “no”.

How many OFA Member Service Representatives can you name that looked after Ottawa-Carleton, Lanark, Arnprior and Renfrew County? They are:

Ralph Staples

Rae Cunningham

M.M. Legault

Ossie Bowes

Bryan Carrol (I have a feeling his wife Marianne was also a service rep. for a time)

Harold Morphy

Richard Barnoski

Bruce Hazelwood 1982

Earl Bennett --1983-87

Barb Scott (Cole)

Graham Lightfoot

Brian Hamilton

Deb Knapton

Jayne Henry

Maynard's Quiz Question

At the September 1947 Renfrew County Federation of Agriculture director's meeting, a letter was received from the provincial federation warning the members that there has

been a movement in operation in different parts of the province and for the members to keep watch for any movement of this kind in their county.

What was this movement? Was it the:

- A/ The Temperance Movement
- B/ Ducks Unlimited
- C/ The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF)
- D/ Fish & Game Clubs
- E/ The Holiness Movement
- F/ The Farmers Union
- G/ The United Farmers' Co-operative of Ontario (UFCO)
- H/ The Masonic Lodge and the Freemasonry Lodge
- I/ The Jehovah Witness
- J/ The New Democratic Party
- K/ Women's Feminist Movement
- L/ The Communist Party of Canada
- M/ The Orange Lodge
- N/ The Christian Farmers of Holland Marsh (Bradford)

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