



Lies, dam(n) lies, and Canadian Milk

WHEN I WAS A LITTLE GIRL, I had a friend who was seriously afraid of clowns. We'd gone together to the circus one day and this big clown with orange hair, a red nose and a big fat belly started shouting at us, gesturing wildly and waving his tiny little hands. She fled in tears and that was the end of our day at the circus. At the time, I thought she was silly to be afraid.

Since last November's US Presidential election, my friend's coulrophobia – fear of clowns – makes more and more sense.

In the reality show circus that has become the hallmark of Donald Trump's presidency, a new euphemism – alt-facts - has emerged... A lie by any other name, "alternative truth" is the new administration's spin for Trump's shoot-from-the-lip populist bombast - served up with a large side of arrogance - to an increasingly stunned world.

Recently, it was Canada's turn to be shocked. In a fiery mid-April speech to Wisconsin factory workers, Trump launched a scathing attack on Canada's dairy farmers.

It was no coincidence that this

happened in Wisconsin, America's top cheese producing state. A week or so earlier, Wisconsin's Grassland Dairy announced it would cut ties with 75 local dairy farmers, sourcing milk instead from its own 5,000-cow herd. According to Wisconsin Senator Tammy Baldwin, "Dairy farmers should not have their businesses ruined and lives upended as a result of Canada's unfair trade practices."

Jumping on the plight of these unfortunate Wisconsin farmers like fleas to a dog, Trump threw his hands in the air and pointed north – blaming Canada: "...some very unfair things have happened to our dairy farmers... and we're going to start working on that."

Two days later, from his Oval Office, Trump doubled down on his attack. Claiming American farmers in Wisconsin and New York State "are being put out of business" because "rules, regulations, different things have changed" in Canada (reality check: they have NOT), Trump cranked up the rhetoric "...what they've done to our dairy farm workers is a disgrace. It's a disgrace..."

Yes well... The disgrace of course

is Trump's ignorance. As every dairy farmer in this country well knows, the problems facing America's dairy sector are directly related to global market conditions: an increased demand for butterfat has resulted in massive surpluses of milk protein. Exacerbated by rapid concentration at the processing level, farmer returns have been below production costs for much of the past decade.

A stronger American dollar and a loss of export markets in China have worsened the situation for American farmers. America is awash in surplus milk as U.S. farmers milk more and more cows to pay the bills. Today in America, a mere 4 percent of farms produce 52 percent of the milk and 40 percent of farms milk over 1,000 cows a day. American taxpayers foot the bill with massive government subsidies to keep the boat afloat.

In contrast, Canada's milk producers are the only farmers in the world who have consistently - for over 40 years - received a return from the market that covers production costs. Not one cent of taxpayer subsidy goes to support

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Canada's supply management system. Canada's dairy sector is based on vibrant family farms. Milk prices paid by Canadian consumers are among the lowest in the world (Nielsen, November 2016).

Precipitating Trump's attack was the recent reduction in US exports of 'diafiltered milk' - a product created by US processors a few years back specifically to get around Canada's trade regulations. Because diafiltered 'milk' (an 85% protein slurry; you would never put this on your cereal!) did not exist when the tariff lines were drawn, it began entering Canada duty-free as a milk protein, seriously displacing Canadian milk in cheese manufacturing and harming the interests of Canadian farmers.

In response, Canadian dairy farmers and processors implemented a national ingredients strategy to improve the price competitiveness of Canadian milk, reducing the market for American diafiltered milk.

In response to Trump's ridiculous assertions, Canada's Ambassador to the US David MacNaughton was quick off the mark: "Canada is not a contributor to the overproduction problem," he said, citing a USDA report that shows "... poor results in the U.S. sector are due to U.S. and global overproduction."

Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland chimed in, assuring Trump Canada is "...fully compliant with all our NAFTA and WTO commitments..."

Pushback has also come from American farmers. Bemoaning the plight of US dairy farmers, U.S. National Farmers' Organization Midwest Regional Director David Kaseno publicly challenged Senator Baldwin to look again at the benefits of Canada's system: "Why is a bright, caring person like you wanting to undermine or even destroy a successful business structure and

replace it with one that is failing? Please consider replacing ours with theirs..."

Unfettered by facts, Trump vows he will renegotiate NAFTA to "fix" the problems of America's dairy farmers - promising the results will be "fantastic."

Best approach to a scary clown? Stand him down... Renegotiate NAFTA, Donald? Bring it. Canada has some fixing of our own to do. Topping the list is exempting water

(Harmonized Commodity Coding System Tariff Item 22.01.9) from both the FTA and the NAFTA. Before British Columbia's Site C dam being built just where needed to bring water from Alaska and Canada across the top of the Rocky Mountains and south into America's central mid west drains Canada dry. **D**

Wendy Holm is a retired Agrologist and farm columnist who is the recipient of 10 national journalism awards.



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James Smith runs Maple Croft Farms Ltd., a 75 milking cow operation near Wyoming, ON. He switched to Kenpal in 2012, because Larry Merner was highly recommended to him when he was having chronic fresh cow and breeding problems. He has been working with Larry, one of Kenpal's dairy specialists, ever since and he uses Kenpal's line of ruminant vitamin/mineral premixes for his milk cows, dry cows and heifers.



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