



One Stop Ram Shop



INTERNATIONAL
NEWSLETTER No. 79
September 2009



Referendum 2009

We were successful, we know. We had a cartoon about us in the Farmers Weekly. Nobody was totally sure of the cartoon's meaning, but it's proof Turner and Hilson made the news.

Planning a 'NO' vote started in 2004, gaining momentum in 2008. Support and criticism was immediate upon our advertisements appearing. Somebody had stood up and said vote 'NO', MWNZ you've had your chance.

We sent out three media releases, two OSRS newsletters and produced ten advertisements in rural newspapers.

Murray gave numerous interviews. Robin gave three radio and one TV (Country Channel) interview. Reporters: Sallie Moore (CHB Press), Joe Dawson (HB Today), Jon Morgan (Dom Post), Neal Wallace (ODT), Andrew Swallow (RN), Rob Tipa (SF) and Terry Brosnanhan, Alan Williams, Tim Fulton (FW) all interviewed Robin.

Letters of support appeared in all the rural publications. Kerry Prenter, David Ritchie, Jon Horrocks, Keith Milne, Rick Cameron, Lesely Powell, Kathy Bellamy, wrote clearly of their personal frustrations with MWNZ. Not



'You lead a vociferous campaign' John Stewart interviewing Robin for the Country Channel
Paratu 4-9-09



Dayanne and Peter erecting referendum signs along SH2. August 2009

all commentators agreed with the 'NO' campaign and they said so but many said that it was well run. Most 'YES' supporters who wrote articles had worked with MWNZ "who were good guys".

Steve Wyn-Harris described us as 'malcontents' which is right; just as we expected he also would have been.

Jeff Grant, so involved with the Meat Board and MWNZ, referred to us as 'guys nearing the end of our farming careers and having lost battles over the last 30 or 40', (FW).

Wow! It is our experience that makes us knowledgeable and tenacious in seeking a 'fair deal' for future generations having seen so little value ourselves. I want a better deal over the next decade.

I am very curious about what battles I've lost, it's certainly not this one. What were the others?

Mike Petersen said we had "limited ownership, no farmer mandate and no proposition". "Ours was a misguided idea which would destroy everything the organization had built up over the years", (SF).

That almost 50% of farmers agreed with us showed they understood us and did not like the Petersen proposals and costly campaign.

In 2003 Petersen and Grant said that they would 'go back to the farm' if their proposal was rejected. RN July 2003.

'If there is a NO vote, I would resign', Petersen SF 16-6-09.

For neither referendum was this a threat?

Alan Emerson was his usual direct, perceptive self. Critical of MWNZ, he was fair and objective, an irritant to 'YES' voters. He wrote in an almost identical fashion in 2003.

That so many commentators had made in 2003 the same observations again in 2009, showed that MWNZ had neither listened nor learned. Now MWNZ must sense the antagonism towards them.

A radio reporter made some interesting private comments (10-8-09) about our protests. Not his exact words. When asked why someone opposing MWNZ could not have air time. "You are spending masses of money to get a 'NO' vote. I've got to be fair to MWNZ". When asked if someone could ask Petersen questions live. "I won't ask MWNZ (Petersen) tricky questions because they are spending lots of money with us".

Who was spending lots of other people's money?

MWNZ could not escape their responsibility in many commercial failures which had cost levy payers. Independent articles outlined huge losses and criticised their role. eg Since 1936 NZ sheep farmers have 'invested' \$1.3 billion in wool research, product development and technology. WEL alone lost \$74,000 per week since September 2003 to professional directors, bureaucrats, technical boffins. Levy payers had little input into WIN, WGH and WPI. Source, Robert Pattison.

*MWNZ is culpable for these disasters.
No wonder the wool levy was rejected.*

That MWNZ could, after the first levy proposal failed, suggest that they meet budget shortfalls by robbing interest and capital out of NZ MB reserves is arrogant.

Backdoor financing from funds needed for a rainy day, after failing to get support at the front door for higher levies, is deceitful.

Reporting was fair. Sometimes objectivity was missing and emotions ruled, but we expected this.

Many farmers see MWNZ as a body worth retaining but are 'hazy' when asked what its role should be. Their achievements since 2004 generate little praise, if any. Richard Loe: "despite my hesitation around voting 'yes' for levy increases, I believe we want MWNZ behind us".

*Yes, MWNZ is behind us, why not **in front**.*

Results and numbers

28000 farmers pay levies, 22000 were registered, 6922 voted (39%). Voting papers were clear and simple. Late registration received their papers promptly. Registration reminders only went to registered levy payers. Many levy payers had no idea how to register. Rolls are a disgrace. Requests to correct the rolls, since 2003, have been ignored. Approximately 16% of the eligible voters backed the proposals. Large farms with more stock provided the mandate for MWNZ.

Voting by wards varied enormously. Douglas and Petersen received most 'YES' votes; with Fox to a lesser degree. A resounding 'NO' was in the Black and Frew wards; to a lesser extent with Parsons.

Farmers eligible for each CLA proposal vote

Sheepmeat	12928 total	6106 voted	47.3%
Beef	15652	6922	44.2%
Wool	12928	6106	47.23%
Goatmeat	910	252	27.9%

MNZ has a weak mandate (as predicted in our preresult media release).

As the MWNZ campaign centred up the leadership this is an ignominious defeat. Downsizing to MNZ will be better handled by leadership untainted by failure. MNZ needs a new structure and role now.

Last words. All proposals were almost rejected.

Positive action has been immediate

22nd September. Joy Gray, Robin Hilson and David Ritchie had a private meeting with the Minister of Agriculture. It was a very constructive meeting too. David Carter's willingness and enthusiasm for his portfolio bodes well for the farming sector.

Next morning the Minister requested both David and Robin be present at a small meeting of 'leading participants' in the wool industry to be held at Parliament. This forum is to be forward-looking and will discuss the implications of not having a wool industry good organization.

One objective of our campaign was to establish a number of small, transparent, grower organizations to direct and commission R & D on behalf of their section of the industry. Funds would be collected to finance research, run a small office and very little else. eg Foundation for Arable Research. Could we not now have a Foundation for Wool Research? A focused body only commissioning R & D if it is quality research beneficial to woolgrowers.

IT'S YOUR MONEY - BE POSITIVE, BE ASSERTIVE

VOTE **NO** to the MWNZ PROPOSAL

Those proposing the 'NO' vote are wanting to return to an organization totally focussed on R&D and technology transfer.

The Foundation for Arable Research (FAR) model could be adapted to fill this role by gathering levies for research, organizing the research and disseminating the results. It is a model that has worked already for 13 years with about 90% approval by levy payers. The best from this and other ideas could be melded into just what is needed.

To comply with the requirements of the commodity levies act, a formal order will need to be formulated and accepted by government.

This order would cover such things as the name of the organization (Pastoral Board?), commencement date. Define what is a collection agent and their commission, show what levies would come from goats, dairy stock, beef stock; wool; who pays levies and to whom. Rates of levies will vary with each product. How levies are calculated and then gathered after discussion with farmers. Levies will be collected at the point of sale (this includes drystock).

The organization will spend or invest all levies. Administration cost will always be less than 10% of the income from levies.

Expenditure - this will be overseen by the Board but farmers will be invited to participate in all activities which concentrate on goat, dairy, sheep and cattle R&D. Pasture and fodder crop research will also be undertaken. Technology transfer is an important activity. There will be no expenditure on commercial activities.

Operation - A Board (4-6?), a CEO and small supporting staff based in a rural centre will run the organization. A lively, personable CEO with a science background will be sought. Potential research projects may be suggested by any farmer. Once okayed by the Board and CEO it will then be put out for tender. Results will remain the property of levy payers. All business will be audited and transparent. As each CLA order nears expiry date the Board will be up for election. Stakeholders will have the opportunity to replace the Board when they vote in the five year referendum. Directors may only stand for two terms of office.

Future Directions - As the objective is to be pro-active, research maybe contracted in areas where farmers interests are best served e.g. climate change, genetic engineering, emission trading, bio security.

FAR has been a small investigative body operating successfully for 13 years with massive support. FAR works and it's structure could be easily adapted to a new pastoral organization which could encompass the most beneficial of MWNZ's activities.

This is endorsed by Davie Ritchie and Keith Milne, both FAR levy payers.

VOTE **NO** to the MWNZ PROPOSAL

MWNZ is continuing with activities not beneficial to farmers. Millions less would be required if they stuck to core business. MWNZ has 70+ staff. *Have they benefited you?* MWNZ head office lease is \$900,000 per annum. *Do you visit the office, ever?*

Old Meat and Wool Boards spent \$840 million of levy money in 13 years.

New MWNZ spent \$175 million in 5 years. *How has the expenditure of \$1,015,000,000 in 18 years benefited you?*

- MWNZ cannot downsize
- MWNZ does not put money in farmers pockets
- MWNZ is a clone of previous producer boards
- MWNZ has failed

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FW 24 Aug 2009

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VOTE **NO** to the MWNZ PROPOSAL

Because they can no longer support 'our' board, a number of experienced, lively farmers, are ready to form an organisation atune to modern farmers requirements.

Based in a rural centre, it will have a small office linked to you all by modern communications. It will be totally transparent, accountable and apolitical. Funds from levies will be required for it to initiate quality R&D, technology transfer, meat quota management, little else. It will lobby and protect farmers' interests.

The whole board will be up for election with each CLA referendum vote i.e every five years. An equal number of representatives will come from each island, possibly three each.

VOTE **NO** to the MWNZ PROPOSAL

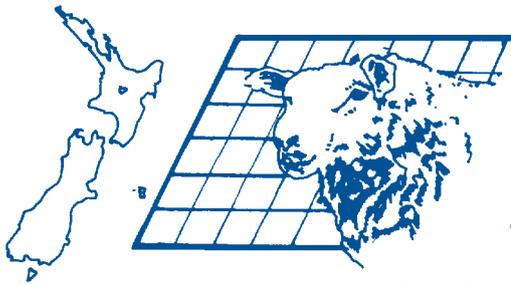
"Dairy farmers should vote NO to the beef levy proposal" - Lachlan McKenzie, Federated Farmers Dairy Chairman

Some farmers who have already voted NO to all proposals, many are award winners. Someone will be close to you.

Andy Guy	Bruce Moseley	Noel Kelly	Peter Smith	Peter Byars
Barry O'Carroll	Stuart Wilson	Joy Gray	Warren d'Ath	Ivan Mickelson
Dennis Meade	Roger Jull	Sid Edwards	John Horrocks	Lachlan Mckenzie
Kerry Parker	Brian Drummond	Pat O'Sullivan	Richard Jull	Keith Milne
Andrew Smith	David Sanders	Peter Sandford	David Ritchie	John Edgar
				David Meade

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TEXEL MARKETING GROUP

INTERNATIONAL
NEWSLETTER No. 43
August 2003

LINKING FARMER PRODUCERS WITH END USERS

OSRS/TMG protests started with nationwide advertisements reprinted here for your interest. (page 4,5&6) Countrywide and Straight Furrow were the publications used. We also got regular editorial comment. After the first advertisement, "A Levy as a Tax", plenty of support rolled in from all over New Zealand. But a greater response came from the next half-pager, "To Vote No is Positive", journalists, farmers, both retired and active responded and we came to realise the depth of feeling. Meanwhile the boards were extremely annoyed that someone was disagreeing with them and did everything they could to put pressure on the journalists. At no time did we not discuss our proposals to either the SheepCo or the Meat NZ directors, but they had their own plan and their own agenda. What we found was that their assurance that they were listening actually meant nought. We monitored their meetings, wherever possible, but after the first twenty agreed amongst ourselves that they still were not prepared to consider changes. We chose to move to the more offensive stage. Eight very clear signs were put along highways at Takapau. Two on State Highway 50 and six on State Highway 2.

At this point our expanded group felt we were wasting time with both SheepCo and Meat NZ who really saw no value in downsizing to an organisation with R & D it's

main focus. Both promoters of the proposal advocated the need to spend up to \$300 million over the next five years, i.e. no change from the past excesses.

'Plan B' has been well documented and sent to SheepCo, Meat NZ, Federated Farmers, the Agricultural Ministry, the Minister of Agriculture, many farmers and journalists. It is noteworthy that a great number of Federated Farmers meat and fibre Chairmen throughout New Zealand have supported us. We have attended consultation meetings but there was very little 'real' discussion. It was a good day for everybody but no-one got down to argue the nitty gritty.

The proposal had moved away from the initial remit of March 2003.

Let a democratic pastoral board be voted in from ten wards from throughout New Zealand. Increase Research and Development, but keep it focused. Get rid of the old Producer Board mentality and start with a clean slate.

You have to vote NO to all proposals. OSRS/TMG farmers, it is your money they wish to spend. A NO vote will help Meat NZ go, (although it will take at least two years) and it will keep the momentum for change right there. No R&D will be lost for the next two years. **There is plenty of time to get structures right.**

Be positive: Vote NO to all proposals. 'Plan B' is ready. Lets get everything right. There is no hurry

For all the following reasons the proposal should be rejected. Vote NO!

- 1. Past spending excesses by boards (\$840m over 13 years)**
 - Planned expenditure of \$300m in 5 years is similar to the past
 - No significant benefits to levy payers has been demonstrated
 - No 'culture' change is evident
- 2. Budget expenditure**
 - Much of the planned R&D is of little value to farmers
 - Trade access is Government business
 - Lobbying is Federated Farmers business
 - Market Development is Processors business
 - Ovita is unproven, fanciful and hugely expensive
 - Having partly financed Ovita; farmers have to buy back its products
- 3. The Single Board and corporate structure**
 - The 50 page 'constitution' is a disgrace
 - It is far removed from the form accepted by voters at the Meat NZ AGM
 - Board decisions can be hidden by the Trust or Company
 - The Board may undertake commercial investment using levy money (Bad)
 - Meat Processors should not have Board representation
- 4. Levies (should only be spent for the benefit of levy payers)**
 - Many activities will not produce benefits to farmers
 - Levy collection is faulty; store sellers do not pay levies (see box)
 - Too much levy money is being asked for.
- 5. Voting**
 - The proposal offered does not reflect the intent of the Meat NZ AGM remit.
 - Outside issues (eg using reserves to fund biotechnology) are not levy issues and complicate the ballot.
 - Many eligible farmers do not know they are entitled to vote.

FW Aug 2003

6. 'The total package'

- There is no system to ensure accountability and transparency.
 - There is no obligation for the Board to seek farmer opinion.
 - What benefit will come from market development, trade access and lobbying?
 - This 'package' is flawed.
 - Plan B is simple, democratic, transparent and ready (see RHS).
 - Farmers only should benefit from the levies raised.
- ### **7. Reserves**
- Investing capital in fanciful biotechnology is speculative.
 - Reserves belong to farmers.

Beware:

A vote for this single organisation will produce a corporate organisation. Once established it will be IMPOSSIBLE to change the constitution. 75% of the single votes will be required to make a change. Get the structure right now!

Mike and Jeff have stated (R. News, July 03) they will 'go back to the farm if their proposal is rejected'. **Blackmail!** Not very good leadership. Would it not be much better that they get nominated for the Pastoral Board. They have so much to offer.

Those driving the opposition to the Meat NZ/SheepCo proposal are *all* experienced farmers, determined to do what is *best for NZ pastoral farming*. Nobody has political aspirations or anything to gain financially out of the campaign.

'Plan B': A Pastoral Board

(as voted for at the last Meat NZ AGM)

Structure:

- 10 Elected farmer directors
- 10 Wards; 5 per island
- Election every three years
- Maximum term of office, 6 years
- Appropriate salaries to attract the 'best brains'
- Apolitical and non-commercial
- An incorporated society for its transparency.

Activity:

To contract providers to undertake R&D of benefit to pastoral farmers.

Aim:

To put money in farmer's pockets.

Store-stock are not levied

4.4m lambs, 3m sheep, 1.1m cattle, .5m calves are sold 'store' annually. These animals are not levied and approximately \$10m is not collected. Farmers 'benefit' from levy financed activities therefore there must be no exclusions.



For more thoughts, comments and a chance to give us your ideas please contact:

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Why we're asking farmers to vote "No" to MWNZ

Robin Hilson

It's 9.45pm and the phone has finally stopped ringing. Calls have come from all over New Zealand, one growling me up, the rest growling about MWNZ proposals in the referendum. Now I'll write this for tomorrow's 10am deadline.

Robert Carter (see previous page) I've known for ages. He was staying here with Suzanne just recently. He is an irascible man with a sharp humour, never afraid to ruffle feathers or challenge woolly thinking. He certainly challenges my opinions, as I do his. This all makes him an interesting person and a very close friend.

In 1992 I started writing my opinion of producer boards in the One Stop Ram Shop /Texel Marketing Group newsletters. This I have done continuously while maintaining contact with directors whenever possible.

I have questioned board expenditure time and time again. I have encouraged increased expenditure for research and development and quality research for ewe efficiency and "on farm" projects.

Sheep Improvement Limited (SIL) was funded initially by MWNZ and has been a marvellous tool for speeding up genetic progress. Breeders would have made that progress but much more slowly. We do pay for using this service.

The Farm Monitor Programme has been successful although now it is getting "tired".

MWNZ funding for on farm projects also gets a big tick. But no more hogget mating or

bearing trials please.

Because I want R&D to be the major activity financed by levies, I have watched closely for outcomes from numerous projects.

Many have been excellent with farmers rapidly applying the knowledge to their business. Levy payers are entitled to clear outcomes which are not always going to be good news or produced quickly.



Sheep and Beef Councils were encouraged to have greater input into projects and they rather protected farmers' interests until "commercial sensitivity" and other such reasons shrouded their inquiry and transparency was lost. This should not happen.

Overall, a big tick for MWNZ for on farm activities, science and technology transfer.

Where MWNZ have failed badly is in the activities of marketing and trade access. Trade access is the task of government.

Marketing is the task of those who own the product and any MWNZ "investment" can be viewed as a subsidy. We do not need MWNZ to help us talk to our customers. Stuart Weston, the chief executive of AFFCO and Keith Cooper, the Silver Fern Farms chief executive have made similar comments. I speak with experience, having exported both meat and wool - marketing is a specialist task about which farmers know very little.

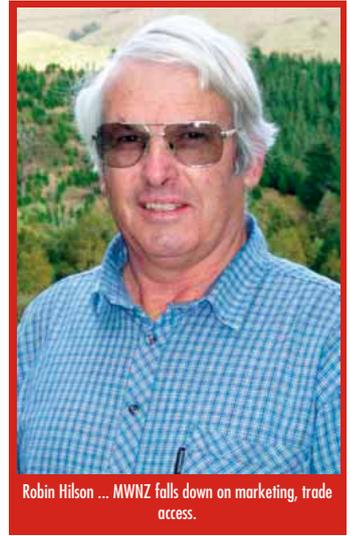
MWNZ is a body that collects levy money which it dispenses for the benefit of farmers. It does not have commercial experience. Attempted and unfinished business everywhere over the years has led to farmer dissatisfaction. Disco, WPH, WIN, WEL, Meat Industry Task Force, Wools of NZ (branding alone cost \$250 million) have come and gone taking levy money with them and leaving lots of resentment. All backed at one time by "our" boards, but how did farmers benefit?

What benefit is there on the farm balance sheet from \$175 million spent in the last five years or the \$840 million spent in the 13 years earlier by Meat and Wool Boards? MWNZ needs to downsize and concentrate on R&D, technology transfer etc. Reserves need to be left for a rainy day. Leverage should be a banned word, it's not good business in this present environment.

Why do dairy farmers not get a better deal when they will be paying a third of the beef levy this season? Why do dairy farmers get one production vote in the referendum per 100 cows and beef farmers get two per 100? Dairy and beef cows attract the same levy a slaughter. Why are the MWNZ rolls still a shambles? How many ex-Monitor farmers still farm?

With the present culture the organisation will never down-size and attend these core concerns.

A smaller, transparent, lean organisation is needed, based in a rural town, certainly not Wellington. Establishment would not be simple but it is needed and needed now. All the contacts which have been established over the



Robin Hilson ... MWNZ falls down on marketing, trade access.

years that serve farmers' best interests would soon come again if mutually required.

Those promoting the "No" vote have neither time or resources to publish all the details of their plans at present, but the structure of the organisation will be similar to one which has been operating very successfully in NZ. However, first we need the No votes.

Now it's lambing time and that's first priority. I'll send away all my No's asap.

Carter is a "sheep-nutter" like me. He has all the skills and clarity of thought we need. He would make an excellent director of this slim producer group, with his knowledge of R&D and electricity he could give it just the shock it needs to always stay transparent and simple.

Robert, join us, we need you. But, now it's after midnight.

Replacing MWNZ not a good idea

Robert Carter

The current debate around the "yes or no" vote for Meat and Wool New Zealand is critical for sheep and beef farmers.

I've been trying to understand the views of the no "vote" advocates and I feel decidedly uneasy about their stance.

My sense of unease is the realisation that without MWNZ we would lose a lot of critical mass and knowledge, useful relationships would be lost along with the progress that we have had to date.

Success in an organisation is about people and the way they work together more than anything else. When you stop this and start it again it takes years to get the thing running again.

When I think about how and what MWNZ has done for me as a farmer, the list is a long one. (SIL, Wormwise, new markets, Monitor farms, wool initiatives etc). Just as long is the list of things we need to do in the future. (New markets, get the WIN process completed, viral pneumonia research, better farming systems to name but a few).

The biggest worry I have is that the old grey haired buggers (like me) saying "no" now were also involved in the debate back in 2000 when we made the biggest necessary changes to the industry boards.

I believe that farmers are tired of change and tired of the myriad of new groups being formed to do this and that and the next thing. Confusion and misunderstandings reign and it's no wonder that Robin Hilson feels that he has not received any benefits from MWNZ.

On the one hand Hilson is a great marketer and user of technology that we have collectively developed but on the other hand he finds it difficult

to acknowledge the achievements of MWNZ thus far.

He is good at making sweeping statements without backing them up.

It's just not good enough to run double page advertisements urging us to vote no without full supporting information.

Have we got time to wait for all this and what about the cost of such procrastinations?

I don't think these guys have a clue about what it takes to set up yet another new organisation, when really what we need to do is to ask the farming community what they want collectively and then get on and do it.

And use the existing organisational horsepower to do this.

I believe that MWNZ has made the right moves

to find what is required and the document on the table fairly represents farmer views.

One could debate forever about what MWNZ has done for farmers.

Farmers who have engaged with the effort have been well rewarded, but there is always room for improvement. Farmers who have not engaged have missed out, but whose fault is that?

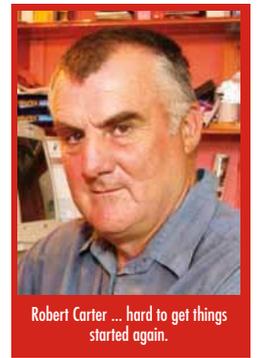
For me, a "yes" vote is critical. It makes no sense at all to create a new organisation with another board of directors when the issues remain the same.

I wonder who the mystery directors are; "waiting in the wings" to take over.

It's been difficult enough to find the directors we have at the present time with the ability and the time to do the job now, let alone find another group and get them up to speed.

I sense some bullshit here.

• **Hilson's response, above**



Robert Carter ... hard to get things started again.

Vote NO Vote NO

TO MEAT & WOOL NEW ZEALAND'S PROPOSAL

A new low-cost proposal is being presented by concerned New Zealand farmers.

After the NO vote, the key focus of our proposal will be

- Presented nationwide
- To support research and development for on-farm benefits only
- Levy Rates: SHEEP - 15c
CATTLE - 51.00
WOOL - 2c/Kg
DAGS - nil
- Communications will be available through the media and electronically

Model Farm Comparison

NOV PROPOSAL LEVY 1000 SHEEP 1000 CATTLE 1000 KG WOOL 1000 DAGS TOTAL: \$114.00	MEAT & WOOL LEVY 1000 SHEEP 1000 CATTLE 1000 KG WOOL 1000 DAGS TOTAL: \$113.830
THE TOTAL OF THESE TWO LEVY RATES OVER THE 3 YEAR PERIOD	
\$4,550 \$13,830	
A farm similar to this example would save \$9280.00	

Vote NO Vote NO

Murray Turner's striking advertisements attracted plenty of attention. Opposition to MWNZ proposals started in 2003 and succeeded in 2009.

Press release 1 August, 2009

A NEW LOW COST PROPOSAL DEVELOPED BY FARMERS CONCERNED ABOUT THE FUTURE FOR MEAT AND WOOL

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

The major activity will be to initiate and fund Research and Development for farmers benefit. Strict guidelines will be applied to ensure quality outcomes without duplication as happened in the past (e.g. hogget mating, bearing studies)

MARKET DEVELOPMENT

This will be left to the Meat Companies who own the product.

MARKET ACCESS

This is a Government activity handled by the Minister of Trade who may seek the assistance of Federated Farmers if a rural voice is needed.

MEAT QUOTA MANAGEMENT

This will remain business for the Meat Board and Directors from our new organization.

COMMUNICATIONS WITH FARMERS

These will be with News-media releases and by computer where-ever possible. Close contact with farmers will be established.

DIRECTORSHIP

Only 4-6 Directors, a CEO/Executive Chairman and a small supporting staff. Head Office will be in a rural centre, yet to be decided.

BUDGET

This will be a priority immediately after the vote. It will be lean and transparent. All activities at present undertaken by MWNZ will be reviewed, some will cease, others sold off as soon as possible. After careful evaluation some will be retained if they have clear benefit to farmers.

RESERVES

The intention is to leave these untouched, if possible, as they are emergency funds to deal with major farming disasters

For this proposal to be implemented farmers need to vote

2 August, 2009

The above press release given by Murray Turner is only an 'outline of objectives'. A final form of the organization and clearly defined objectives will come together quickly after the 'No' vote is received in the August, CLA referendum to the MWNZ proposal.

And, who are 'we'?

We are a number of very experienced, committed farmers spread through-out the whole of New Zealand.

We have been waiting for years [decades for many] for 'our' Producer Boards to give us a return for all the levy money expenditure made on our behalf.

We backed the formation of MWNZ in the 2003 referendum. This organisation was to be a single Board to represent farmer's interests; whose activities would be lean and accountable; whose business would benefit farmers.

This has not happened.

In the last 18 years the Wool Board, Meat Board and MWNZ have spent \$1,015,000,000 of farmer's money for which there is little obvious benefit.

This is a huge sum of money. Farmers cannot allow this situation to continue.

Changes are needed. MWNZ cannot downsize or prove its worth.

By voting 'No' to MWNZ's proposal farmers can now safely be assured that an organisation, as outlined, is ready to carry out a range of core activities for them. The group consists of experienced farmers nation-wide who have spent time at all levels of rural representation and numbers of lively 'young guns' also.

Robin Hilson

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A wake-up call for MWNZ? Press release...27, August, 2009. (Referendum prediction)

My support for Producer Boards has always been considerable. Gradually as I watched their performance and extravagance I became disillusioned. I started writing my views in my One Stop Ram Shop newsletters in 1992.

I campaigned effectively in 2003 for a 'no' vote in the referendum and also suggested an alternative structure to the organization which I felt would better serve farmers than that proposed. About 38% of the farmers voted 'no', but when the stock entitlement was added to that vote MWNZ got very substantial backing. The 'no' vote number was pleasing.

Unbeknown to each other, Murray Turner and I took out advertisements in rural papers just a month ago. These adverts, asked levy payers to vote 'no' to MWNZ's proposals and queried the value of many activities which required greater levies.

Jointly we proposed a cost-effective alternative.

So, we haven't just popped up.

We attracted the ire of Mike Petersen who said we had 'no proposal and no directors', which is correct. At present, having directors is totally premature but we do have the outline of a proposal which we have broadcast, anything more would also be premature.

We are amused with this attention because it all misses the point that we wish to improve the MWNZ performance and provide tangible benefits for levy-payers. If the organization could only listen, downsize and stick to core business i.e. grassroots business we could happily work with them. MWNZ shows no willingness to downsize.

It is our opinion that the organization is involved in too many activities of little benefit to farmers. It does not represent farmers interests, it uses highly inaccurate rolls, it has no political mandate, is not transparent, it never publishes detailed reports after trips are undertaken on farmer's behalf all over the globe, it never publishes outcomes which are meaningful for almost all its activities, it does not change in response to farmers pleas, it is reactionary [e.g. the Meat Task Force was needed 18 months before it was formed, as had been asked for]

If the organization was effective it would have our support, its value would be obvious.

MWNZ needed to spend plenty for this 2009 CLA referendum. Farmers rejected the original proposal, so a new proposal was put together and sent out with voting papers.

Our adverts, and thoughts appeared immediately in rural newspapers and in One Stop Ram Shop newsletters. MWNZ responded by spending huge amounts on Radio time, Adverts, in papers, News Releases, TV commercials, emails, mail-outs all of which absorbed Wellington staff time as well. Some extraordinary telephoning of farmers was carried out which did not please anybody; it was so biased towards a 'yes' vote.

MWNZ has had 5 years and \$175 million to prove itself. In this time farmers stock numbers and incomes have deteriorated markedly. No activities by MWNZ have improved the situation.

Producer Boards should cut their expenditure when farmers suffer such downturns as is here now. Declining stock numbers mean a lesser levy sum for MWNZ. Less stock; less levy dollars collected. If MWNZ had arrested the stock decline would they have asked for the same levies? MWNZ could not reverse the decline because they have no power, no commercial influence upon markets.

A vote of 'no' cast is a clear message, it means 'no' to the proposal and too MWNZ.

That MWNZ could come up with another proposal for farmers before Christmas because the 'no' vote was substantial is incredible. They and their plans are not wanted by farmers, they should go away.

MWNZ will get the 'yes' vote. They will prevail because larger farm businesses will vote 'yes'. The 'no' vote will be considerable from medium and small farmers however their stock numbers will be insufficient to swing the referendum.

If MWNZ can learn from this result and spend five years proving their worth, they will get plenty of encouragement from us. If they do not heed the warning, by 2015/6, when another \$250 million of levy money has been spent they will not get another chance.

Good Luck MWNZ.

Robin Hilson

Why take on the Goliath that is MWNZ.....9/9/09, FW

In its present form this organization cannot produce benefits for levy-payers.

With the NZ pastoral industry in a real crisis MWNZ proposed an increase in levies without being prepared to cut any of its activities. Angry farmers forced a rethink, but still the increases are to come with reserves helping to fund a shortfall. Bad decision.

When the organization was formed in 2004 its structure had been finalized by a Labour Government select committee and its role was to continue with the old Wool Board, Meat Board activities. However, MWNZ was to be transparent, efficient

and lean. This has not happened and all the self-promotion could not hide the fact from farmers. It has been more of the old activities. 'Investments' and money disappearing.

In July & August we advertised our thoughts in an as objective manner as possible.

There is an urgent need for MWNZ to remove themselves from activities best left to government i.e. trade negotiations and market access and from activities which are the processor's responsibility, such as marketing.

MWNZ is a producer body; but the table is shared with appointees with no farming background so to have a 'better balance'. Inviting experts for specific advice is wise but to give voting powers to outside appointees is wrong. Farmer representatives should look after levy money expenditure and they alone.

MWNZ has some success with projects and they have been well documented. The role of MWNZ as it was involved in the start-ups, Ovita, WEL, Disco, WONZ, WIN, WPI, WPH, Catapult has not been forgotten. MWNZ was absent at the finish, like the millions they 'invested' in these activities.

MWNZ has no mandate to be political as Petersen has said often. Federated Farmers is the farmer's voice in Wellington and it is a passionate one too. MWNZ has interfered politically and should stay away.

MWNZ has no power. Its only influence comes from its ability to persuade people and back up this with levy money expenditure.

We offered a sound structure in a 2003 submission which was rejected, but now this is even more appropriate.

A structure formed from the best points of Veg Fed, Foundation of Arable Research etc is possible. It could be transparent and effective, using levy funds for industry requested projects with published outcomes and full accountability. These two grower bodies have huge support because they keep close to the levy-payer.

Voting has taken place and MWNZ has a 'terribly weak mandate' [FW editorial]

The whole presentation by MWNZ [now MNZ] was centred upon the leadership of Petersen. That it failed after such a huge outlay [\$1m?] of levy-payers money is a reflection of the deep dissatisfaction with MNZ and Petersen. Farmers voted knowingly, just they way they felt. They know changes are needed and services will be lost, but did they benefit from them in the past? MNZ is the loser, they were morally defeated. There was an ignominious failure after spending \$175 million.

We all know what MNZ has to do and removing the 'W' out of their name is not enough. Issues such as the appalling rolls, their own effectiveness, location of headquarters and replacement of the chairman need urgent attention.

If Murray and I had the resources used by MNZ, it would have been the end of MWNZ.

Now it is time for building again and we are willing to help

David has bruised Goliath. Will Goliath learn. David is very tenacious.

Robin Hilson



Shearing cost more than the 19 bales of clean white, 33 micron hogget, wool returned at auction. Aug, 2009



Pretending. Filming ram hoggets. Robin, Colin Burlace and Ian Healey providing footage for the 'Country Channel'.



Dorper hoggets shedding. Burnside, Sept 2009



"Why MWNZ should not be supported?". Robin addressing a farm discussion group in Alexander Petriés woolshed. Wairarapa



Dorper hoggets shedding. One mated as a lamb. A sire ram out with the hoggets. OSRS, Sept 2009



Tree planting programmes initiated by OSRS transformed this previously bare landscape. Tarata, Sept, 2009



Good deed. A no longer cast ewe strides off. Mossburn, Southland



Preparing for the 'Farmers March' in Wellington. Labour politicians do not like farmers. 1985