kraftc

a quiet pastoral nec
the smouldering sun

by Don Humphries

OTTAWA (CUP) – Wander through your local supermarket or corner store some day and take a look at the variety of brands in the dairy products and salad dressing shelves. You'll find small Kraftco lables on almost all cheeses, and salad dressings.

Kraftco Corporation has a virtual monomply in this area of the food industry; it either makes the products itself or owns subsidiaries that do.

The National Farmers' Union has taken on this monopolistic giant in a boycott that is intensifying across the country as it enters a second year.

The Boycott was called in response to dairy farmers' demands for better prices for their products through a collective bargaining agreement and the refusal by Kraft to discuss the matter with the NFU.

The National Farmers' Union (NFU) was founded in 1969 with support coming mainly from western Canada. Since then it has spread across the country organizing locals and carrying out militant actions to back farmers' demands.

The NFU is fiting to enable farmers to negotiate in regional groups or on the national level with marketing boards and processors for the prices paid on farm products, and with suppliers for the prices paid on material inputs.

At present, farmers do not have such rights and must accept whatever they are offered for their products by the marketing boards and corporate business. Farmers have often been forced to sell their products at below production cost.

The NFU says that unless the present system is changed, the Task Force on Agriculture's goal of removing two-thirds of the present number of farm operators and replacing them with corporate farms will be achieved.

Collective bargaining is the vehicle to stop rural depopulation and strengthen rural communities, says the farmers' organization.

Locals are encouraged to formulate policy for their area and the national good of all farmers since local decision-making is an important part of NFU policy.

The National Farmers' Union president Roy Atkinson puts it this way:

"It seems to us to make much more sense to move to a position where you decentralize your population into self-sufficient units. And to maintain on their own people who have to make day-to-day decisions, rather than tie everyone to a time clock and become part of the industrial machine."

The Kraft Boycott is important to the NFU because it is the means through which farmers may obtain collective bargaining rights.

Until now, the precise reasons for making Kraft the victim of a boycott have been unclear to may people. The historical development and implications of the Boycott have now been compiled and can be coherently outlined.

In 1966 there were 22,206 dairy farmers in Ontario; by 1971, 7664 of them had been squeezed out of business. In the last two-and-a-half years, 44 Canadian co-op and independent cheese factories closed down. They handled a combined volume of 600 million pounds of industrial milk.

While that was happening, Kraft received a $250,000 interest-free, forgiveable loan from the Ontario government to build an addition to its Ingleside Ontario plant. (A forgiveable loan does not have to be paid back.)

The same company that was virtually given a quarter-of-a-million dollars is the largest North American dairy monopoly. The American-owned corporation has branch plants in more than 100 countries – it controls 80 per cent of the Canadian cheese production.

In 1970, Kraft moved
corporation in North Ame
and a net profit of $82,0
increased to $91,3000,00
was $318,000.

Kraft's total sales rank
Packers monopoly in the
net profits more than thre

In 1969, Kraft spent $
second largest television ad

Meanwhile, the farmer
steadily decreased from
1970. Between 1968 and
by $137 million or eigh
food prices increased b
farmer's average net incom

Ontario dairy farmers
Ontario Milk Marketing
elected by farmers, but
government appointed O

The OMMB also allo
factories may receive thro
1969. Each processor wa
bought and sold, th
monopolies to take over

In Leeds County nea
once 92 small plants; the
co-op is one.

Local dairy farmers b
invested $60,000 to mak
In 1970 the co-op paid
members. Its location all
milk to the pland for co
it to the closest Kraft or

The new quota system
four million pounds of
processed a year earlier.
– who are in turn operati
penalizes them for produ
required by law to ship th

the Ontario Milk Mark
for milk fluctuates greatl
in a one-year period fo
milk:

January
Septem
Februa

While the consumer
milk products, the prices

The NFU approached
the Ontario Marketing
Marketing Board with s
not paid enough for thei
the corporations could w
of the enormous profits t

The government ag
couldn't be done.

To bring attention t
were also NFU members,
Kraft Ingleside plant
culmination of seventeen
farmers held throughout