

Thought for food

Poison control: organics in a nutshell

Why buying organic food is worth the price

by Matthew Thompson

From Aura Foods and True Foods in Fredericton, to increasingly larger selections in national grocery chains, organic food has exploded in popularity lately. But why is this a growing market? After all, no real evidence has been found to suggest that organic food has a higher nutritional value than 'conventional' food. The appeal of organic food, however, lies not in its nutrition, but rather from concerns over the widespread use of pesticides.

Pesticides are used by conventional farmers to reduce the amount of crop damage done by insects, fungi, and weeds. These three pests tend to be most harmful to plant development because they either feed upon the crops or compete for soil nutrients and sunlight.

There are two particular problems with the use of pesticides. First, pesticide use can directly harm human health because they tend to leave residue on our food. Many



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The choice to go organic is based mostly on increased pesticide use.

debates have considered how much pesticide residue can safely be consumed and the extent of the harm posed by pesticide consumption. While it is well known that pesticides cause many short term effects, little is still known on the long-term threats to human health. Currently, small traces of pesticide residue is accepted in Canadian markets although recent research by the

Pesticide Action Network in the UK suggests that the prevalence of pesticide residues is currently too high in markets worldwide. Two particularly toxic pesticides, organophosphates and carbamates, continue to compose a significant portion of pesticide residue found on produce. Since these pesticides cannot simply be washed off with water, retailers tend to use chlorine-

based solutions, in essence trading one chemical for another.

The second concern with regard to pesticides has to do with its environmental impact. Biodiversity near conventional farms have shown to be endangered by pesticide runoff. By threatening biodiversity we stand to lose our wildlife and the sustainability of our farmland and natural environment. When species are endangered, other species are inherently affected through the loss of food sources. Farming should not threaten biodiversity but should instead tap into the harmony and interconnectedness of life.

Pesticides are meant to improve the efficiency of our farms, but chemicals that poison insects, fungi, and weeds are likely poisonous to all life, including ours. Unfortunately, due to the labour intensity of organic farming and the competition from conventional farming, organic food tends to be more expensive and therefore less available to students. Organic prices have been decreasing with consumer demand, on the other hand, rejuvenating hope that healthy food will be accessible for everyone in the near future.

Because everything is political

After the fact (chew on this!)

by Tan-Nee Ng

Aha. I love it. Whenever I'm suffering from pesky writer's block, instead of wasting hours racking my brain for an article idea, I can simply just list a bunch of interesting (and somewhat political) facts/tidbits/points. So without further adieu, chew on this!

• Executives make over 419 times the wage of a blue-collar person.

• In 1983, 50 corporations controlled over 90 per cent of the mass media. In 1992 the figure dropped to fewer than two dozen, and three years ago in 2000, the figure dropped to an appalling six.

• Hitler once said: "What good fortune for those of us in power that people do not think."

• Anarchists oppose the idea that power and domination are necessary for society, and instead advocate more co-operative, anti-hierarchical forms of social, political and economic organization.

• Over 20 per cent of the world's rich survive on over 86 per cent of the world's resources.

• The senses of non-human animals are vastly more sensitive and refined than our own. After all, they must rely on the capacity to feel pain in order to survive and avoid injury in the wild.

• You can read the whole book "Vegan: The New Ethics of Eating" by Erik Marcus for free on vegan.com. Goveg.com has the video "Meet Your Meat" available for download, which exposes how

animals are raised and farmed; more information on why the hell some people choose to go vegan/vegetarian.

• Seventy per cent of all US grain - and one third of the world's total grain harvest - is fed to cattle and other livestock. At the same time, between 40 and 60 million people die each year from hunger and diseases related to hunger. As many as one million suffer from chronic hunger and malnourishment.

• In Africa, nearly one in three people are undernourished. In Latin America, nearly one out of every seven people goes to bed hungry each night. In Asia and the Pacific, 27 per cent of the people live at the edge of starvation. In the Near East, one in nine is underfed.

• In one week enough money is spent on nuclear weapons to feed the entire world for one year.

• Less than five per cent of money is printed by *The Bank of Canada* on fine paper; the other 95 per cent of it exists as credit.

• Internationally, women do two-thirds of the world's work for five per cent of the income.

• Since spring 1999, Saudi Arabian women — if they are married and over 35 years old — are allowed to drive cars between 7 am and 7 pm, provided they have the written permission of their husbands.

I guess we still have a long ways to go baby.

Author's note: For list of sources, please e-mail Tan-Nee Ng at k4azx@unb.ca

Point / Counterpoint

Uniting the right

by UNB Debating Union

The Progressive Conservative party should merge with the Canadian Alliance

Canada needs a united right-wing party. We only need to examine election results from our last two federal elections to see the vote splitting that has occurred, especially in Ontario. There is a strong conservative vote in Ontario, but because that vote is split between two parties the Liberals have been able to slide in between to capture the popular vote.

Outside of Ontario, we need to recognize how region-centric the Progressive Conservative and Canadian Alliance parties have become. Western Canada supports the Alliance while Eastern Canada supports the PCs. There is very little to suggest that this situation will change anytime soon. Merging the two parties is the first step to creating a right-wing alternative to the Liberals that represents all of Canada.

What happens if the PC party does not merge with the Alliance? At best, the party can expect to hold on to the seats it currently occupies in the House of Commons. It will likely lose many of those seats to the juggernaut Liberal government led by Paul Martin.

It is naive to think a combined party will be able to become the government after the next federal election, but it can provide a strong united opposition to the Liberals. Four years after, when a new election is called, the party will be able to seriously contend for the role of government. We need to think of the good of the party in the long run.

No one expects the merger to happen smoothly. But at the end of the day, we need to recognize that having a unified right is essential for Canada, because it is the only way a party other than the Liberals will be able to govern the country.

The UNB Debating Union meets every Monday and Thursday nights at 7pm, Tilley Hall room 305. New members are always welcomed! Questions? E-mail them to unbdebating@hotmail.com

The Progressive Conservative party should not merge with the Canadian Alliance

Merging with the Canadian Alliance means that key Progressive Conservative ideals will be sacrificed in the process. The Alliance cannot water down their ideology to match the PC ideology, because doing so ignores the reason why the Reform Party (and later the Alliance) was formed: as an extreme right-wing alternative to the PC Party. Joining the Canadian Alliance draws the Conservative party further right from the centre.

This is important because Canadians vote for moderate parties. Extreme left and right wing parties (such as the NDP and the Alliance) have never held power in the history of Canada. Only Canada's two moderate parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives, have been voted in as government.

Continuing with this idea, the second choice for many conservative voters is the Liberal party, not the Alliance. By moving the party further right, we lose "Red Tories." These voters will instead vote for the Liberal party.

On the flip side, dissatisfied Liberal voters will not vote for the merged party because it's too far from the centre. They will instead continue to vote Liberal, because they do not have a good second option.

There's also a significant stigma attached to the Alliance in Quebec and Atlantic Canada. The new party will have to deal with the ignorant comments made by the Alliance party. The combined party does not get a clean slate.

The Progressive Conservative Party of Canada has a tough road ahead of itself. Merging with the Canadian Alliance is not the solution to its problems.

Have students been reduced to a commodity, to be sold on the labour market?

Looking at the cost of education

by Sean Moore

The high cost of university education is one of the most important issues facing students. This issue also has profound implications for university workers. To properly address this problem,

though, one must first understand its "political-economic character."

In modern capitalist society, higher education has become a commodity. Students are faced with the overwhelming pressures of getting a job. The rising cost of tuition is the greatest inhibitor to this necessity, and those students who do not have the fortune of upper class financial bliss live and endure this problem every day. Is

the proper role of a university to educate and enlighten, or to put a price tag on education while reducing the students themselves to a commodity to be sold on the ruthless and competitive labour market?

Tuition is not the only financial barrier these students face. Housing and food concerns also define their day-to-day lives. For most students this means taking out a student loan, getting a part-time job, or both. You can already start to see how the rise of tuition will affect these peoples' lives. As tuition continues to rise, poor students will be forced to drop out and lower-middle class students on the border of financial crisis will be brought to even more desperate financial

circumstances. In other words, the university slowly becomes more and more an exclusive institution for the upper classes. Is this what education has been reduced to? The pursuit of a job? We see in Europe, for example, many cases of free education. Sure the money must come from somewhere, but is burdening already poor students with more financial trouble the appropriate way to pay this bill? Surely not.

What's the connection to the university workers? The question must be raised if tuition is constantly on the rise, then why are wages for support and janitorial staff so low and benefits so limited? Workers are faced with serious and unending financial concerns. I am not talking

about the professors on campus whose financial position is comfortable and secure compared to that of working class people. Many workers on campus are desperate with families to provide for. The implications of these low wages can be grave for these working class families. Two years ago there was threat of a strike at UNB. Are things all better now? What were the compromises made by the workers? Did the other unions and faculty on campus stand in solidarity with these workers? How is the rise of tuition related to the desperate state of workers at UNB?

The university line is that it's expensive to run a university; tuition must be raised to keep on top of things. This is why in 10 years

tuition has doubled! There is an outrageous cost claiming being done by the university administration which demands accountability. Where, I ask, is all the money going? While the poor students are fleeced of their money, must the university workers be paid the crumbs which fall from the table?

I know I'm not the only one who feels this way. It is necessary that those who are concerned about this problem be active and question the university's budget. Students and workers have two choices, you can ignore the problem facing countless students and workers, or you could question the university and try to change the desperate position of students and workers at UNB. Think about it.

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