

A Farmer's Lament

I stand in front of the gathering, shabby hat in hand, worn clothing, unpolished boots and weatherbeaten face giving mute testimony to my station in life.

I say, "Hello, my name is Dave and I am a farmer."

My peers chant back, "Welcome, Dave."

I say, "I come from a long line of farmers, dating back to colonial times in the Victoria area."

"We hear you, Dave."

"This year, urban deer, rabbits, grey squirrels and wireworm devastated my crops, and C-difficile may be lurking in my carrots."

"We have all been there, Dave."

"I am at the end of my tether, I am nearly sixty years old and am subsidizing my habit with earnings from outside sources. I have over a million dollars invested in land and machinery and despite my wife and I working seven days a week, we make less than ten thousand dollars per year. There are now twenty-five new houses on the farm next door and the people in them object to the way we look and smell. It does not matter that we were there first."

"You have lots of company, Dave, you are not alone; in fact Stats Can says you fit the profile of the average farmer perfectly."

I shuffle back to my chair, relieved that my confession has made me feel welcome in this fellowship. I worry that our little group has become smaller in the last few years and wonder who will be the next to leave us. My higher power makes me believe that I am here to stay.

As the next speaker begins, I do not hear her because the words of my grandfather start to echo in my mind. "Son, if you are smart enough to be a farmer, you are too smart to be a farmer."

"But you are a farmer, Grand-dad."

David Pollock, farmer and IFA (Island Farmers' Alliance) member