

CONCLUSION

A Call to Common Ground

“The Farm Bureau has tried to drive a wedge between the environmental community and the family-farming community, which really should be natural allies. Family farmers help protect the land, and we want to promote their continuation. I wish the Farm Bureau would focus attention on bridging the gap, because we’d be the first ones to get up on that bridge and meet them halfway.”

— Rodger Schlickeisen, Defenders of Wildlife president.

Judging from dozens of interviews conducted for this report, plenty of farmers and ranchers see common ground with environmentalists. Some are Farm Bureau members who cannot penetrate the entrenched structure of the organization to make their voices heard. Others are former members working for change through other means. As this report illustrates, the Farm Bureau

has pursued a deliberate strategy of fostering enmity between farmers and environmentalists, two groups that could benefit each other considerably by working together. Ranchers like Jim Winder and Mike Callicrate and farmers like Scott Dye and Bill Christisen have seen past the Farm Bureau’s facade. They believe it is time to put antagonism aside and concentrate on the common goals of protecting the environment and preserving the tradition of family farms.

Attacking the wolf, environmental-protection laws and the federal government diverts attention from the more important and complicated questions about who controls agriculture in this country and how that control is sustained. The Farm Bureau has successfully dodged these questions since Representative Joseph Resnick first raised them 33 years ago. By joining forces, perhaps family farmers and environmentalists can finally get some answers.