David Kirk
1920 - 2003

David Kirk, a lifelong spokesman and lobbyist for farmers in Canada and internationally, was born in Saskatoon and graduated from the University of Saskatchewan. For many years he worked with the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool in Regina. He moved to Ottawa in 1963 to become the National Secretary of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture. For 22 years he was its executive secretary, and became known as the “farmers’ mouthpiece”. David also served as the executive secretary of the Dairy Farmers of Canada, and of the Canadian Egg Producers’ Council for much of that period.

The Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, in writing about Kirk and his associate Bill Hamilton, described them as the farmers’ representatives in Ottawa, adding that “their byword is honesty. Their methods are not so much hidden as quiet. Their world is...warm, safe and satisfying— for a cause everyone favours, at least in theory.”

David Kirk put it this way: “It is easy for me to be relatively high-minded about these matters [of being a farmers’ lobby].

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In the first place, the farm movement is on the whole democratic in its processes. And although it has become more narrowly professional, its roots and history are not only democratic but in important measures idealistic”.

David provided leadership both nationally and internationally. He was a member of the policy committee of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers, chairman of the Grains Committee from 1972 to 1985, and a member of the Food and Agriculture Committee of the U.S. National Planning Association. He was also a member of the Economic Council of Canada, the Canadian Consumers’ Council, the Canadian Council on Rural Development and the C.D. Howe Research Institute. He provided strong leadership to the development of the National Milk Marketing Plan and helped initiate national conferences on swine improvement and egg grading, leading to the formation of the Canadian Pork Council, Canadian Egg Marketing Agency and the Canadian Egg Producers’ Council.

It is no wonder, then, that the farm community of Canada bestowed so many honours on him. He was awarded the Gold Medal by the Dairy Bureau of Canada, the Certificate of Excellence Award by the Ontario Milk Marketing Board, the Queen’s Centennial Medal in 1975, the Centennial Medal in 1987 and the McLean Lectureship by the University of Guelph. Finally, in 1989 he was voted into the Canadian Agricultural Hall of Fame Association.