



Inducted: 2011

Ralph Ferguson, an agricultural activist, was born in Mosa Township. He farmed in Lambton County where he served on county and provincial boards for pork, eggs, soybeans and wheat. He was a charter member of the National Farm Products Council, MP for the federal riding of Lambton-Middlesex from 1980-1984 and again from 1988 until his retirement in 1993. During this time he was appointed parliamentary secretary to two different ministries, appointed Minister of Agriculture and in opposition served as Agriculture Critic and assistant critic for international trade. Ralph is probably most noted for his "Compare the Share" report which documented the farm gate price, the wholesale price and the retail price of each of the commodity groups.

HONOURABLE RALPH HUGH DUNCAN FERGUSON

1929 -

Ralph Ferguson was born in Mosa Township on September 13, 1929, to parents Hugh Ferguson and Annie MacDonald. He spent his early years in Middlesex County before family moved to Lambton County finally settling in Brooke Township where Ralph farmed all his life.

His formal education ended in grade 10 when the war years and a family home fire demanded that he become fulltime on the farm. He was the first President of Brooke Junior Farmers and credits this group's activities, especially the debating competitions, for preparing him for his future.

In 1952 Ralph married Dolores Garrod of Blenheim. Together they raised four children: Douglas, David, Susan and John. They purchased their initial farm of 150 acres in Lambton County where they had a cow-calf operation and built 2 modern egg production barns in the early 1970's. The farm hosted many stewardship projects including woodlot, pasture and production research. David and his wife, Gabrielle, now manage the farm.

As a young man Ralph was involved in various farm organizations and active in forming marketing boards for hogs, wheat and eggs. In 1972 he was made a charter member of the Farm Products Marketing Council spending the next 4 years in Ottawa (home on weekends) forming legislation to bring order to the egg and poultry industry.

In 1980 Ralph was elected Member of Parliament for Lambton –Middlesex using "gasohol" in his trucks during the campaign to show his support for this new source of fuel. He was appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business and Tourism. He was then appointed Deputy Whip and later Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance. While on the Finance Committee he successfully re-introduced the Farm

Creditor's Arrangement Act in the form of a Private Member Bill which prevented the pre-mature foreclosure of farm operations.

A highlight of his first term in Ottawa is when Ralph accompanied Prime Minister Trudeau on a trade mission to Asia. In the Philippines he was impressed with the Asian Rice Institute which had established a huge underground bunker to store thousands of varieties of rice and parent genes in case of a disaster that destroyed other sources of seed. During his brief term as Minister of Agriculture in 1984 he had a similar seed bank built into a new research facility in Morden, Manitoba.

He farmed full-time from 1984 until 1988 when he was re-elected as Member of Parliament. During this time he and his staff produced the well-known "Compare the Share" study mainly comparing prices at the farm gate, at the processors and at the retail level. This data helped to illustrate the relatively low share of margin that was realized by farmers at the farm gate. This work was later updated by St. Peter's College of Muenster, Saskatchewan.

Retiring in 1993 he continued his interest in assuring quality of imported food and bringing attention to concerns with the use of the BST growth hormone in milk production. He also organized a Cancer Survey of an area of Middlesex-Lambton County to investigate potential causes.

Ralph helped to facilitate the making of a video dedicated to documenting the history of the Scots Pioneers of Lambton and West Middlesex Counties. It is intended mainly for schools to teach pioneer stories to future generations. He has also documented some of his history in family memoir called "Witness to history, a Lifetime of Memories."