

Stacy Hartmann, DCFN, Sierra Club Iowa Chapter Grassroots Award Acceptance Speech

Oct. 10, 2015

I'm honored to receive this Sierra Club award. I accept it on behalf of Dallas County Farmers and Neighbors, our supporters and many others who care about the issue of livestock confinements and work to oppose them.

It is the position of Dallas County Farmers and Neighbors that confinements harm the environment, human health, quality of life, property values and rural economies. In short, they are a scourge, the embodiment of all that is wrong and absurd about industrial agriculture and the food system it has given us. By extension, their proliferation points to a broken political system, which not only fails to effectively regulate them, but actually protects and promotes them as a matter of policy.

As you know, the confinement industry is powerful. It is organized. It is wealthy. It utterly dominates the opposition, successfully stifling meaningful debate or reform through its manipulation of media and politicians. It has even shaped our language, *our very thinking about what successful livestock farming is*.

You also know that opposing confinements is daunting. Depending on where you live or work, it can be socially or professionally fatal. Many individuals and organizations have expended tremendous effort over the last 30 years locally and statewide and yet have comparably little to show for it. In my work on this issue I often find myself talking to people who feel hopeless. Many, in fact, have given up. The political revolution required to change the situation is nowhere on the horizon.

While the politics of the problem seem insurmountable, I'd like to posit the claim that livestock confinement is fundamentally a problem of the heart, *a moral problem*. Confinements are the sour fruit harvested from a shallow soil of greed and apathy. They demonstrate a lack of reverence for, and lack of sympathy with, creation, a lack of care for neighbors. The political revolution we desire may be far off, but I find the words of Tolstoy instructive: "There can only be one permanent revolution . . . a moral one: the regeneration of the inner man."

To that end, I encourage people to worry a little less about changing large, complex systems but instead change their own behavior and that of people in their circle of influence. *Choose food very carefully*. Stop eating and purchasing meat, dairy and eggs that are not humanely raised, and encourage, *exhort* others to do the same. Do not collaborate with or support the confinement industry by giving them your money *or your silence*. Work in your families, workplaces, interest groups, churches and so on to shift menus away from confinement products.

This will require you to speak up and speak out. Sometimes it will be uncomfortable, *but we must draw clear lines in our daily lives against this abomination*. We cannot expect political or societal change to occur until we have embraced individual change. We must each be an evangelist for honorable food and *real farming, in word and deed*.

Thank you again, and please reach out to DCFN through our web or FB page. We need more people invested and active in opposing confinements and promoting sustainable, humane livestock production.