

# COMB Courier

Mid-Michigan—Land of the bee

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## Say it ain't so Steverino

To the ever-increasing woes of the Michigan's beekeepers, we will have to add Steve Forbes, editor of *Forbes* magazine. You remember Steve Forbes, former presidential candidate: placed a \$10 million bet on himself and couldn't get out of the starting gate. Here is his editorial expounding on the benefits of neonicotinoids to mankind.

## U.S. Beekeepers attacked by *Forbes*

*Forbes* magazine May 25, 2015

By editor Steve Forbes

### *Unfounded Frankenfood Fears*

Anti-progress extremists never let the truth stand in their way of their goal to turn the clock back to a time when malnutrition and outright famine were the norm. Their relentless assault on genetically modified crops or organisms (GM crops or GMO) so-called Frankenfoods, is an ongoing example of their destructive, fact-free approach. One shudders to think of the global misery that would have ensued had these forces been around in the 1960's, when Norman Borlaug spearheaded the breakthroughs dubbed the Green Revolution, which enormously increased crop yields, particularly in India. There and elsewhere more than a billion lives were saved, people who would otherwise have been lost to Hunger. Borlaug won the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts. Today he'd be attacked as an anti-nature techno-monster.

Another instance of this anti-technology mind-set is the hullabaloo over honeybees. Extremist environmentalists have been making stinging statements that honeybees, which pollenate our crops and flowers, are in dire danger; that hive health is declining, as are honeybee populations. This, shout the alarmists, requires government action, specifically, banning a class of agro-chemicals called neonicotinoids. As happens all too often in this Luddite age, these pesticides are actually a great advance because they help increase agricultural output, a necessity as world populations grow and people achieve higher standards of living. Nor are they harmful to humans—or honeybees.

The sky-is-falling cry of "Beepocalypse!" is baloney. The greatest threat to these critters is big government.

In a *Forbes.com* post, "Rash Regulation Is What Really Threatening Honeybees," based on a comprehensive study conducted by Angela Logomasini of the Competitive Enterprise Institute, the record is set straight.

- **Bee populations.** Over the past half-century honeybee populations have increased nicely around the world. "American and European commercial hives have decreased largely because honey production moved to other nations, where the number of hives has grown substantially." There have been health challenges in the U.S. and Europe, which beekeepers have been effectively battling. Survival rates, for instance, have been improving and are now near normal.
- **Neonicotinoids.** Targets of extremists, these insecticides are not villains but heroes. They are a godsend, because they minimize the need to spray plants, thereby nearly eliminating any possible collateral damage to honeybees and other non-targets. "There is no pattern associated

with neonicotinoid use and hive health issues,” Logomasini notes. “In many places where these chemicals are used widely, such as in Australia, hives are doing fine.”

Nonetheless, regulators, including—no surprise—the EPA, are waging war against neonicotinoids. The E.U. a bastion of this kind of deadly, know-nothing mentality, has banned them indefinitely. N.B. This part of his editorial is taken *in toto*.

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## Reply from your editor.

Although Mr. Forbes is just fulfilling his obligation to fill the blank space in his magazine, his views are dangerous. Mr. Forbes is a man of influence writing in a nationally influential magazine. *Forbes* magazine is a respected journal with a wide readership; therefore it carries a lot of weight with the business community. His choice to use the Competitive Enterprise Institute as his source of information indicates his bias. His use of a flawed resource to buttress his agenda does not speak well of him.

Here are a few observations on his editorial.

1. **Pandering to agribusiness.** This editorial is a complete sop to corporate farming.
2. **Anti-progress extremists?** Really, Mr. Forbes, beekeepers see themselves, and rightly so, as helpful curators of the earth. Bees are essential to pollination in America, it doesn't help us one whit to have Vietnam, China, India, and Argentina exporting cheap honey to us at the cost of neglecting our own agricultural needs.
3. **Luddites:** Early 19<sup>th</sup> century English handloom textile workers, put out on the street by industrial revolution weaving machines, who decided to adjust the balance by destroying said machines. The ringleaders were hanged.
4. **Not harmful to bees.** Obviously Mr. Forbes has not done his homework before prognosticating about the insidious side effects of insecticides. On June 2, 2015 the *Washington Post* put out an editorial pinpointing U.S. bee decline, 42% bee colony deaths in 2014, and its connection with pesticides—neonicotinoids were specifically mentioned.
5. **Pesticides a great advance.** I think getting rid of ignorant editors would be a great advance.
6. **Not harmful to humans or bees.** The jury is out on this one—if we survive!
7. **Critters**—the cavalier use of slang detracts from the seriousness of his subject.
8. **Competitive Enterprise Institute.** These are the people he relies on for his research? The CEI is an advocacy group based in Washington D.C. They were responsible for the tobacco companies disinformation campaign, are climate change deniers, they opposed fuel efficiency standards, and developed 'spin' for the drug industry.
9. **Moved production overseas.** See No. 2
10. **Neonicotinoids.** According to Mr. Forbes these insidious pesticides are not villains, but heroes, a godsend. Maybe the Apocalypse is something we should look forward to.
11. **No nothing mentality.** (EU has banned the use of neonicotinoids.) Mr. Forbes sees it as okay to slander those who differ from him.

Parthian shot. If Mr. Forbes can wax prophetic about the bee industry, maybe we at COMB can expound on derivatives, bank bailouts, and stock market advisories, with the same equanimity.

C.O.M.B. Monthly meeting.  
2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of the month 6:30pm.  
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## Bee Read

If you have a comment, query, problem, or an interesting story or anecdote concerning bees that you would like to share with your fellow beekeepers, here is your chance. Send it in to [mjbusybee@frontier.com](mailto:mjbusybee@frontier.com) or [debbie.foote@hotmail.com](mailto:debbie.foote@hotmail.com) or hand it in at the meeting. Jane Carhartt may be contacted at [janesbees@yahoo.com](mailto:janesbees@yahoo.com) This is your newsletter, make use of it!

## Bee Classifieds

If you have any bee-related items you would like to buy, sell, or trade, this section is for you. This service is free for members of C.O.M.B. You may submit ads to Mike French or Deb Foote. There will be a nominal fee for associate members.

Deadline for next issue is July 3rd