



(Photo: Courtesy Gloria Roark)

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The alleged coalition of Farmers and Ranchers of Montana, or FARM, was created by a group of individuals with the assistance and guidance of Mercury. Mercury (officials), by their own admission on their website, describe themselves as a “high stakes public strategy firm who use their expertise and reach to gain competitive advantage for clients.”

Mercury consists of Republican Denny Rehberg, co-chairman of their Washington, D.C., office. Rehberg has been in Montana politics far too long. Others involved in Mercury are attorney Mark Baker, Karen Fagg, Lorents Grosfield, Roger Raynal, Scott Reichner and Walt Sales. All of these executives are politicians, involving themselves in real estate, water issues, insurance, banking and law. Further, Mercury is a part of Omnicom Group Inc., a leading global marketing and corporate communications company.

On June 1, 2014, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes signed a contract with Mark Baker of Mercury. Baker was hired "to provide advice concerning strategic plans for effective public and political communication with the Montana Congressional delegation, the Obama Administration, members of the Legislature, governor, and key executive branch policy makers, regulatory agency personnel and key news media representatives throughout the state," according to CSKT minutes. These costs are paid with monies that the tribe has received most recently from the federal government in settlements, specifically \$2.8 million.....that's you and me! One million dollars was designated to Mercury, and the balance is being used to fund events and pay for various expenses as they arise to achieve their success in getting the compact passed.

Mercury has created the illusion that all ranchers and farmers are supporting their beliefs and efforts to get the water compact approved. This is not true. Their website lists 269 people statewide, listing only their first name and last initial (19 people from Missoula). Do these people even own land or are they sympathetic to Indian lore? Are they apartment dwellers who support the progressive agenda? Are they even citizens? Why hide under rocks? Another observation worth noting is the sole supporting organization: Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes.

You have probably heard radio announcements that FARM has been sponsoring. This group is not speaking for most ranchers and irrigators. Mercury is profiting off the tribes and Montana taxpayers. Their goal to make money and, to separate the water from the land, which will render the property worthless. Mercury and the tribes are operating in a covert fashion in the dark of night. Their efforts are sabotaging ranchers, farmers, and irrigators to force them off their lands, to reduce food production, and drive people out of business.

All of Northwest Montana will be impacted. The Flathead area will be changed forever. This is a precedent case that will reduce all water rights throughout the state. Agriculture has been the mainstay of Montana, and we cannot lose our ranchers and farmers.

The most egregious action is the violation of private property rights guaranteed under the federal and state constitutions. This compact removes people who are subject to 100

percent state taxation to no representation in our state and federal government. In order to preserve our Republic, we cannot be a nation within a nation. All peoples have to assimilate and be treated equally.

Please write to Gov. Steve Bullock, Attorney General Tim Fox, and members of the Legislature, specifically the Natural Resources Committee, and ask them to oppose the water compact.

Gloria and Douglas Roark are ranchers in the Blackfoot Valley at Greenough. The ranch was a homestead ranch and is over 100 years old.