



The Winds of Change

Cattlemen from across the country convened in January in New Orleans for the annual NCA convention.

Cattlemen who attended the 1984 convention of the National Cattlemen's Assn. returned home with increased optimism about future profit opportunities.

Several convention speakers pointed to indications of an improved economy, increased demand for beef, a more stable cost situation, smaller livestock numbers and meat supplies, and prospects for stronger markets during the next few years.

The cattlemen also took action on policies which should help improve the industry climate, and they heard about plans for association changes which should contribute to the increased opportunities for profit.

Almost 4,000 persons were on hand for the Jan. 23-25 convention in New Orleans. Vice President George Bush and Agriculture Secretary John Block were among the principal speakers. Both indicated that they would continue to work for increased exports of beef. They also advocated more of a free enterprise approach to agriculture.

W.J. (Dub) Waldrip, retiring NCA president, cautioned that the meat business is now a "mature" and very competitive business, and cyclical windfalls like those enjoyed at times in the past are not likely in the future. However, he said, cattlemen definitely should have increased profit opportunities during the next two or three years, as beef supplies decrease cyclically. Larger grain supplies should contribute to better returns for producers as well as feeders.

Waldrip and the new president, John Weber, also pointed to association changes—recommended by management consultants and approved by the NCA board—which would be made during the coming year. These changes should broaden and strengthen the association and improve its government affairs, member education and public relations services to members and the industry.

One of the major policy actions by the association membership was a resolution to become more involved in the formulation of farm policy. Following up on an earlier directive by the board, the members said that cattlemen should become involved to the extent that farm policies and programs have an effect on the beef cattle industry.

The resolution included support of a transition of American agriculture to a market-oriented system, with competitive market prices for all commodities (rather than government support and control programs) determining producers' decisions. Adoption of the resolution sets the stage for cattle industry input into development of the 1985 farm bill.

Among other policy actions—out of a total of 63 new and amended resolutions and directives approved by the members—were:

- Adoption of a revised policy on cattle futures markets. Proposals to seek abolishment of futures failed, and the Marketing Committee and members went on to adopt a position which calls for continued autonomy of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, strict enforcement of futures laws and regulations, revisions in live and feeder cattle contracts, comprehensive education on the use and non-use of futures, additional unbiased research on cash and futures market relationships, and dissemination of all research information relating to futures and options.

- Support of an import surcharge on goods from Japan if Japan does not begin meaningful liberalization of its market for beef by April 1, 1984, following expiration of current agreements.

(continued on page 218)

Elected to Lead NCA



Top elected officers of the NCA officers are, from left, President John Weber, Alturas, Calif.; President-Elect Jo Ann Smith, Micanopy, Fla.; and First Vice President Don Butler, Tucson, Ariz. The elections took place during the final business session of the annual NCA convention in New Orleans.

Female Leadership Ahead

by Cheryl Johnson

The 1984 National Cattlemen's Assn. convention convened with its theme "Winds of Change" and a noteworthy change did take place as Jo Ann Smith, Micanopy, Fla., became president-elect of this male-dominated cattle organization.

In an exclusive interview in New Orleans just prior to her election Jo Ann expressed her feelings on being a woman in the man's world of the cattle industry. She's quite comfortable with the new leadership post and holds the strong attitude, "Judge me for my ability, not for the issue of being a woman." She considers the male NCA leadership to be "extremely supportive, extremely encouraging" about her movement up through the ranks. Commenting on any foreseeable objections from the predominantly male membership, Jo Ann said, "I don't see that there's any problem. The psychology has changed; the perception is changing. They see me as someone who might not have the genetic knowledge that they have about cattle, but on the other hand they know I would have more knowledge relative to the consumer. We've seen a decline in beef consumption and I think that if there is a plus to my being a woman in this spot, it's the fact that I might better relate to the consumer than a man."

From her beginnings, Jo Ann Smith has functioned at the center of her family's cattle operation, involving herself in all facets of the commercial operation there in Florida. Participating in local civic organizations and state level cattle groups through the years, she has cultivated a family trait to be a doer and a leader. "I grew up active in agriculture and where politics and involvement was quite the way of life. There was a to-

day and a yesterday and what you did with it and your abilities was very key to my family. They encouraged me to participate in a variety of activities, like public speaking, which helped me develop confidence early. Debating makes you less aware you're on stage."

Jo Ann had been very active in the American National Cattlemen's Assn. previous to its merger with the National Livestock Feeders Assn. seven years ago. The combined organizations became National Cattlemen's Assn. and she initially was appointed chairman of one of the 13 standing NCA committees. One of her toughest challenges since has been as chairperson of the Beef Referendum Committee. On a personal level the woman was very concerned that the job she was assigned could be accomplished. At the referendum's failure in 1980, soul-searching questions haunted her: "... was it something that we didn't do? Could I have worked harder and done more? I did not realize that the failed vote would be such a letdown."

In retrospect, several issues were culprits. "We had not expected defeat. Detriments in the form of interest rates, inflation, unemployment and the grain embargo all worked against us. We had not considered the possibility of defeat, but within a month's period of time the whole psychology of our country began to change. Confidence in national government was at a low level. We began to get concerned and hoped the positive issues would outweigh the negative. I believe the voter expression exhibited the fact that the referendum involved too much government."

(continued on page 218)

Female Leadership . . .

(continued from page 216)

The defeat was a difficult one. Jo Ann remembers that she forced herself to back off, re-evaluate and come back positive and strong. That's exactly how she deals with the issues and functions as an officer of the NCA. Her dedication is demonstrated by her voice, a very direct eye contact and the poised manner displayed when she interacts with people. Presently her most sincere concern embraces the consumer issue.

In her status as a woman Jo Ann confirms her feelings of closeness to the consumer and his needs. Her interest and talents were first used here when she chaired the NCA Beef Promotion and Consumer Relations Committee. Consumer education and communication will be the major thrust of her new office. The NCA must maintain a dialogue ". . . a kind of intercommunication between the consumer and producer, not just from the producer to the consumer. It has to make that total circle to be successful." Negative press on the beef/health issue has created a questioning consumer attitude toward the product. Jo Ann emphasizes the importance of giving the consumer credible information. She feels that heightened credibility will create positive customer response to the beef voice.

Many of Jo Ann's ideas have been strengthened by the recent evaluation done by Arthur Young & Co., management consultant. This study suggests that much consumer education is needed. All efforts have a price tag and she sees "a rechanneling of budget priorities" in the offing.

As she assumes the second highest office in the 230,000-member NCA organization, Jo Ann is extremely aware of the charge handed her and fellow officers. "This coming year the single most important function of the NCA will be to represent the membership in their many key areas. Certainly on the Washington scene will be the 1985 Farm Bill, along with import/export issues, appropriations and budgeting. Farm credit is of increasing concern to our membership. As stated, we have just completed the evaluation study with Arthur Young and we will be redirecting our course with the newly-created administrative position of senior vice president. As always, maintaining a workable membership plan is an ongoing pursuit. The feedback from the grassroots in all of these issues is something we strongly need."

This grassroots concern is a conscious priority in her mind as she meets the question, "Why is NCA not more effective?" As she sees it, "a change process is going on. Some very successful projects and goals deserve recognition. The key is in what Arthur Young said, 'What we have done is not perceived to have been done by NCA.' Many legislative actions have taken place about which our story has never been told strongly enough to make people aware of NCA's participation." There is an adjusting of efforts to gain a new image. That image must



NCA President-Elect Jo Ann Smith is involved in all facets of her family's commercial cattle operation near Micanopy, Fla.

come from the cycling of information through the grassroots segment and the entire beef industry.

Realistically, getting feedback from the grassroots cross section is tough to do. That's where the affiliates, including breed associations, come into play. They're the interface. If the system is working, the affiliates are represented on the various standing committees; those committees make policy decisions; those policy decisions are put into action and the connection is achieved between grassroots and NCA. Says Jo Ann, "If the system isn't working, then we need to look at the system."

Addressing the breed association point, she boldly calls for unity and better communication. Better rapport is needed. Strong is her feeling that "we're all in this together," and to be effective in protecting the beef industry those breed association leaders must remember their connection to the whole of the unit. An honest working together will enhance the industry's effectiveness with the consumer. She reiterates that commercial and purebred stockmen alike are affected by major issues to the breed, such as the Farm Bill. "So there is a reason for unity and the reason is survival. We're a minority compared with the other side of the consumer issue."

Clearly Jo Ann Smith sees the total picture. It's a mutuality that must be balanced with the individuality of breeds. All ag organizations, not just breed associations, need to work jointly to be successful, particularly in changing policy in Washington or in redirecting funds. "We're maturing to understand and recognize that we must still move in a bigger circle."

To be included in that bigger circle are the women of the cattle industry. There is definitely a place for them with the men who are making the beef business move. "It's imperative that women become knowledgeable of the full dimension of the cattle business. Often women are involved in one segment, maybe the show ring, maybe

keeping records. But in order to truly understand, they have to understand the total business. I'm talking about the debits as well as the credits and that it takes 365 days a year in order to have an animal that will be sold two years from now. Whether it becomes a steer or a breeding animal, the entire cycle from time of conception to the table should be a familiar story to the women of the industry."

Jo Ann thoroughly comprehends that cycle. It's been her life and she enjoys it all. Her enthusiasm and total participation is backed 100 percent by her family. "We talked this out before I ever got involved, and they're extremely supportive." Husband Cedric and their son, a law school senior, handle the ranch management duties since Jo Ann is required to travel considerably. Their daughter works as an accountant in Nashville. In attendance at the NCA New Orleans convention was her family including her parents, ages 91 and 80, obvious demonstration of their support. "For them to travel all this way takes courage," Jo Ann proudly points.

But courage is not uncommon here. Jo Ann Smith faces her future as NCA president-elect with realistic optimism and spirit. Relying on the strength of the grassroots base, it's Jo Ann's mission to build on that and use it in the best way possible to further the effectiveness of the National Cattlemen's Assn. As a true agribusinesswoman her NCA calling is clear; it's the challenge she was meant to meet. **AJ**

The Winds of Change . . .

(continued from page 216)

- Support of action at the federal level to amend the Uniform Commercial Code in order to eliminate problems related to clear title and the purchase of mortgaged livestock and grain.

- Approval of research priorities previously adopted by the board of directors—priorities which put new emphasis on research dealing with the end product (beef) and marketing, as well as cattle production.

- Support of efforts to reduce government deficits, primarily through reductions in government spending—in order to help maintain a stronger economy and better profit opportunities for cattlemen.

- Direction to NCA, working with the Beef Industry Council, to follow up on NCA-conducted industry tours for food writers and help obtain additional national media stories on the positive values and uses of beef.

- Support of several steps to obtain or retain use of various pesticides and other chemicals that can help assure more efficient livestock production and control of predators.

- Support of positions on government programs that can help assure private property and water rights for livestock producers.

- Endorsement of haying and grazing of a program crop (primarily wheat) on non-allotment acres of a farm. **AJ**