

from the office

LEAD IN

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Cattle producers, pinched by reduced consumer demand for beef, are finally coming to grips with the need for a well-funded nation-wide beef information and promotion program.

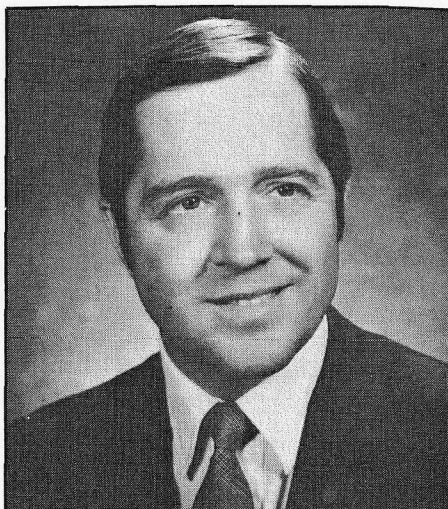
The recent National Beef Forum in Kansas City was a constructive beginning to develop long-range plans to overcome our industry's inadequate national promotion and advertising. Sponsored by the National Cattlemen's Assn. and the Beef Industry Council of the National Live Stock and Meat Board, the forum attracted 175 representatives from 65 cattle, beef promotion, packer, livestock market, breed association and other organizations.

A steering committee will be named by the NCA president to look at the beef business, to set program priorities and to recommend ways in which funds, provided by cattlemen and others, can be used most effectively.

The most immediate result of the meeting was to recommend a minimum check-off of 25¢ per head on all cattle sold by members of state cattlemen's associations and to work toward a minimum state check-off of \$1 per head. In addition, the forum participants recommended that each state should immediately invest at least 40% of its collections in national programs to be coordinated by the Beef Industry Council. Beef surplus states are urged to invest 60% of their collections in national programs.

Consultant Firm Hired

James Mullins, president of the Beef Industry Council, also announced that a marketing consulting firm has been hired to identify consumer needs and to plan ways of communicating the desirability of beef to consumers. The firm also will help the council plan a long-range marketing strategy for beef.



Already an excellent promotional campaign, funded by 10 states, is underway in four major cities. It is a step in the right direction toward solving our problems. But to be effective, promotion must be concentrated in areas of high potential consumer demand, and it must be an on-going year-around effort.

As registered breeders, we must play a more important role in financing these programs. For example, the Missouri and Illinois Angus Assns. are sponsoring a voluntary \$1 per head check-off that goes to the Beef Industry Council to support beef promotion. Similar programs are being considered by other states. I believe the climate is right for broad participation in this state-by-state program, both by Angus and state cattlemen's organizations.

A survey by Doane Agricultural Service has shown that two-thirds of the cattlemen in the country now are willing to support a check-off program of up to 50¢ per animal sold. It is ironic that an industry that has

turned down two Beferendum programs, the last one by a simple majority, now seems willing to move ahead with an industry-wide check-off program. Possibly the key to success is the use of existing organizations such as NCA, the Beef Industry Council and established state cattlemen's and breed associations rather than forming a new organization.

Another Key

Another key to the current willingness of cattlemen to cooperate with each other is the fact that we are being out-promoted by almost every other food-producing industry. This, coupled with the fact that the economy is playing havoc with the budgets of most families, obviously has cut into consumer demand for beef and kept prices low. It is becoming evident that beef cannot continue to dominate as this country's favorite food unless a majority of cattle producers and those in related industries are willing to join together and compete head to head with the producers of other meats and meat substitutes.

To refresh your memory, spending for beef promotion is the lowest per capita of all commodities except potatoes and sheep. At the top of the promotion list is the dairy industry, which annually invests 32¢ for promotion and advertising for each person in the United States. Florida citrus is second with 11.7¢, then comes cotton with 10.2¢, pork with 4¢, eggs with 3.2¢ and then beef with 2.7¢.

The purpose of quoting these figures and of writing this column is not to frighten anyone. I do hope it stimulates thought on the part of all Angus breeders relative to what our commitment should be to the future of the beef industry. Our final decision is vital to our future, because the problems we face are not likely to go away on their own. 