

Maryland Cattlemen

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start it and it has to come from the producer," he suggested.

A short time after Wilson spoke, Kansans, along with the American National Cattlemen's Association, Texas and Southwest Cattle Raisers Association, National Wool Growers Association, Corn-Belt Meat Producers Association, and Illinois Agricultural Association, met with meat packers, and a steering committee was appointed for the formation of an organization. In 1920, Swine producers joined in the cause and the National Livestock and Meat Board was officially launched on March 10, 1922. Locke reported that there were twelve supporting organizations in the original coalition, and "eleven of the seventeen directors were producers. This emphasis on production remains the philosophy of the meat board today," added Locke.

Now thirty organizations form the coalition with 130 directors representing various segments of the industry, including producers, packers, stockyards, breed associations, cattlemen, and the restaurant and food services.

Locke said that check-off dollars collected today are used for "protecting and improving consumer demand for beef, pork and veal, and for promotion and research projects. With the 1985 Farm Act came a mandate for "beef promotion and research - it gave us a chance to show what could be done," explained Locke. The dollar per head check-off referendum was passed after previous unsuccessful attempts.

The first check-off program in this country was on a voluntary basis, Locke recalled. "Producers were asked for five cents per carload of livestock." A carload was equivalent to 25 head of cattle, or 75 hogs or 75 sheep and lambs. In 1931 it was increased to 25 cents per carload with an alternate provision offered at 1 cent per head.

"In the early days," said Locke, "the directors found more problems than solutions." Faced with such adversaries as vegetarians who circulated rumors claiming meat caused rheumatism and gout, and the post-war European market blaming American meat for an epidemic of influenza that killed ten million people world-wide,

and Californians who believed they would contract hoof and mouth disease, the National Livestock and Meat Board "raised enough money to be a force in promoting American meat."

Locke observed that "a shortcoming of modern agriculture is that we pay little attention to history. Here we are today with problems not a lot unlike what they had when they began. They talked about rheumatism and gout. We talk about calories and cholesterol." Locke said "the adversaries are primarily the same." Over the years "there have been many, many, many changes, particularly in communications and technolo-

gy," noted Locke. "We're still down there in the trenches fighting for our share of the market."

On a closing note, the Chairman of the National Livestock and Meat Board encouraged the members of the Maryland Cattlemen's Association to "get enthusiastically involved and be positive. There are great changes taking place all about us. If you're not willing to change, you'd better give up the ship."

In a report by the National Cattlemen magazine, total membership in the Maryland Cattlemen's Association as of March 31, 1988 was 63; Pennsylvania Cattlemen's Association, 123. The Pennsylvania Cattlemen's Conference is scheduled for March 17 and 18 at the Altoona Sheraton, Route 220 South, Altoona, Pa.

* Maryland Cattlemen's Asso-

ciation, P.O. Box 125, Mt. Airy, MD 21771.

* Pennsylvania Cattlemen's Association, Inc., P.O. Box 7100, State College, PA 16803.

Dr. Milton Nelson of the University of Maryland is spearheading efforts in the state to commemorate National Agriculture Day, March 20. "This is a first for Maryland this year," noted Nelson. "We're finally getting in sync with National aspirations," by celebrating on March 20 rather

than another date.

Nelson has distributed 200 posters with the theme- Maryland with Pride, National Agriculture Day, Honoring America's Producers.

The poster has a color illustration entitled Harvest, by Bart Forbes.

"This is a joint project involving the Extension Service, the Maryland Department of Agriculture, and a group called Maryland Ag Week, Inc.," explained Nelson.



Dr. Milton Nelson promotes National Ag Day.



Leon Locke was the keynote speaker at the Maryland Cattlemen's annual meeting.

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