

National Hammer Award

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The fact that this is an election year, and that President Clinton happened to be in Scranton the same day had nothing to do with Dunn's presence in Harrisburg, he said. In effect, Dunn said that the area of USDA he currently oversees is a service function that has as a necessary function of its integrity to distance itself of political maneuvering.

He said that allowing Hawkins and the others to take on responsibility for changing the way government does business, to delegate that authority was a risk for the team's supervisors — implying that the supervisors would have been responsible should the project fail to succeed or result in problems.

"But it is an example of what can happen in government," Dunn said. "This is not a political ploy. This is a genuine effort to do something to improve government. They got an award that was a Hammer Award. The real reward for them was to provide service to their customers."

Dunn said he believed in what noted philosopher, physician, music scholar and Protestant clergyman Albert Schweitzer

(1875-1965) had said, "Example is not the main thing in influencing others — it's the only thing."

Hawkins said the award was very much appreciated by the team because it signified that to them that somebody was noticing, other than the people they served, that government could change and also that they were allowed to make their own decisions and have input into creating and carrying out a better way of providing service.

"Basically this idea started back in 1991, and it was at my suggestion to my former supervisor Dr. Ulysses Lane, area veterinarian in charge," Hawkins said.

She said that essentially the way service was provided was according to political and geographical subdivisions, not according to service need.

This both frustrated workers and those needing the services of the APHIS Veterinary Services to do business.

The change essentially was to remove the hierarchy of Hawkins being supervisor to that of team leader, respecting the integrity and intelligence of other team members in getting work done and in knowing what needs to be done.

Geographic and political bound-

aries were removed from the service region. The strategy instead was to focus on serving the areas where the work was needed.

Further, part of the team's responsibility was to go out to individual farms for field service, for which the farms previously had to be charged \$350 each. The team worked with those needing the work done and (similar to how the Holstein Association USA now tries to group its classifications, for those familiar with that service) was able to get service trips lined up to that more than one farm in an area could receive service per trip, thereby reducing the cost per farm to \$50, a reduction of \$300 per farm per trip.

In 1991, when Hawkins first joined the USDA, having sold a small animal veterinary practice in the Allentown area, she said the eastern region received 420 permit applications. Of those received, only 130 were served with an average turnaround time of 11 months.

Under the team and service approach, in 1993 the team received 580 permit requests, all were served and average turnaround was reduced to 30 days.

"Our field team solved this problem in several ways. First we plotted the premises when our byproducts inspections needed to be done. With this information we

were able to 'batch' several premises together and go out and do several permits at one time, bringing the average manhour for a single inspection from an average of four hours to approximately one hour per inspection.

"In addition, we set up a priority system for handling permits. Based on priority, we decide to handle many non-priority permits by phone and fax. This allowed us to greatly increase the number of permits served and to decrease the cycle time," she said.

Two team members purchased their own phone answering machines and facsimile machines. At their own cost, one member even installed a separate telephone line to handle agency business.

"I ran a veterinary hospital in the private sector," Hawkins said, "and when I came to work for government, I was shocked at the way things were done and how low a priority was placed on customer service. So that was my impetus (to change government)."

She said she received tentative approval for a one-year pilot project and then it had to be evaluated. The group set up goals, such as improving animal disease detection service for such disease as tuberculosis, and to respond more

quickly to the animal byproducts customers, such as taxidermists who need to have animal part imported, or bone meal coming in-country, or even pig ear doggie chews coming in from Brazil.

She explained that all that has to be tested for approval. "We had a tremendous number and they just weren't getting serviced because the vast majority were falling within one person's jurisdiction (under the old government setup.)"

The team approach was to spend more effort in where the work was, instead of having one worker overworked and the other perhaps underchallenged.

The group started tracking the number of permits, how long it took to service customers, tracking the rate of submissions for disease testing at slaughter houses and other pertinent measurable parameters of business.

Once a baseline of current activity was established, the team set about improving those numbers.

The team also developed a survey for customers, the first developed by the USDA's veterinary services in the nation.

"Compared to the way government normally works, this was a significant change," Hawkins said.

The group began and continues to monitor its success according to customer satisfaction — something Hawkins said she was used to doing in the private sector.

Again receiving the award and having Assistant Secretary Dunn travel from Washington on a Friday morning during a heavy winter snowstorm impressed Hawkins, she said.

She said Dunn took out two cards — they are cards issued by the Clinton Administration and signed by those who receive them as a promise to make government better by reinventing regulation and government.

As a member of reinventing government team, the card says the bearer will invent a government that puts people first by "putting customers first, cutting red tape, empowering employees to get results, (and) cutting back to basics."

On the reverse of the card is a list of the ways in which this will be done. "We will: create a clear sense of mission; steer more, row less; delegate authority and responsibility, help communities solve their own problems; replace regulations with incentives; develop budgets based on outcomes; inject competition into everything we do; search for market, not administrative solutions; (and) measure our success by customer satisfaction."

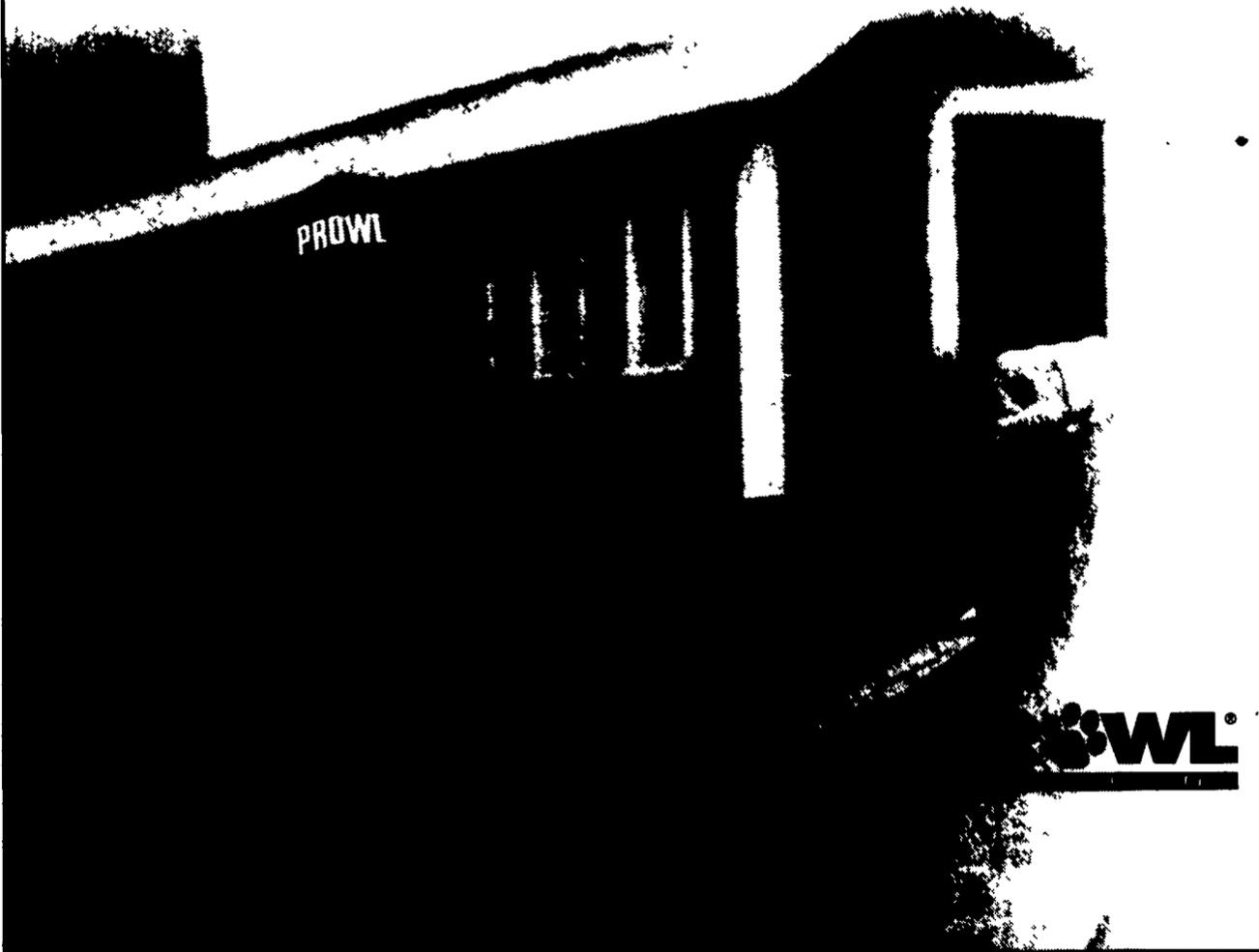
On the other card, on reinventing regulation, is printed, "All regulators will: cut obsolete regulations; reward results, not red tape;

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