

(Continued from Page A1)

refreshingly upbeat.

"I'll be the first to admit that it takes a lot of fun out of the business and it takes a lot of energy, but we have a choice. We can complain, react, pretend that it doesn't exist, or become involved," he said.

By becoming involved, Stoltzfus hopes to positively influence government regulations. It's the committee's job to satisfy the expectations of consumers, processors, wholesalers, caterers, home food service companies, and suppliers.

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Stoltzfus doesn't believe that it is the government's intent to put the little guy out of business or that consumer groups are not open to the meat industry's viewpoint.

"But they are tired of hearing 'this is going to put me out of business.' They need someone to articulate the problems."

Stoltzfus has met the enemy, so to speak, face to face and has not found them irrational.

"There is a willingness for them to hear—to get past the rhetoric and find out the real issues," said Stoltzfus, whose boyish appearance belies his 39 years. Sporting a close-trimmed beard and wearing jeans and a cotton pullover shirt, Stoltzfus appears relaxed and yet animated with energy.

Skeptics question whether or not the committee is merely a political ploy—an attempt to

appease both consumer groups who are rallying for zero tolerance of bacteria in food and for industry groups who resent government control in their every undertaking. Appointing a committee gives the appearance that the government is concerned and wants a task force that looks at all angles of the problem. The concept looks good but it may be entirely ineffective, Stoltzfus admitted. A previous committee had been formulated but only met about once a year.

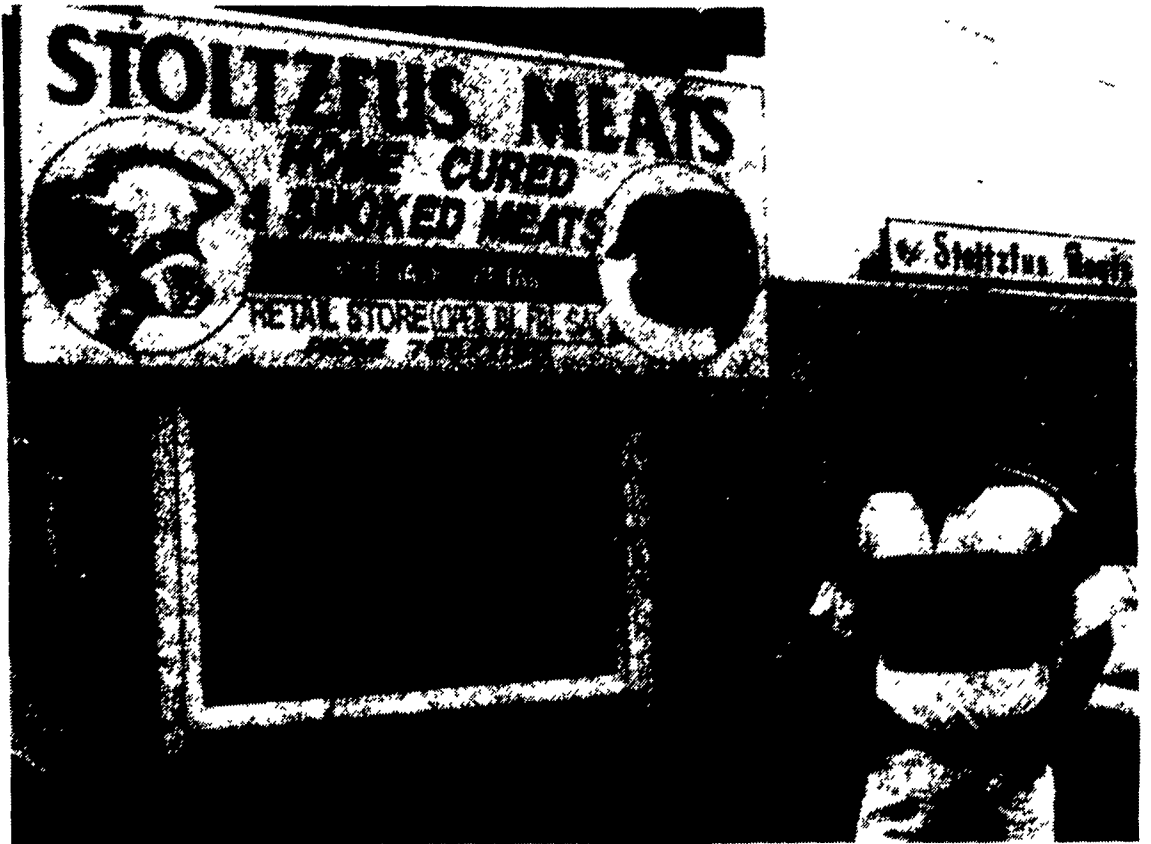
"Maybe the bottom line is that this is a political issue or perhaps it is a gesture to put together a committee in an attempt to get to the

heart of the issues. Whatever it is, I want to believe the latter. I want to give this a chance," Stoltzfus said.

Stoltzfus has been involved in public debate for several years through his involvement as a member of the Meat Inspection Governmental Affairs Committee of the American Association of Meat Processors (AAMP), based in Elizabethtown. Through that involvement, Stoltzfus has been to Washington D.C. several times.

"I met some vocal groups (attacking the meat industry). Many are articulate spokespeople for their cause," Stoltzfus said.

He recalled an especially difficult attempt to reach an understanding between consumer groups and the meat industry. At a hearing of approximately 80 persons, Stoltzfus sat across from a mother whose toddler had died as



J. Myron Stoltzfus, owner and operator of Stoltzfus Meats Inc., has been appointed by U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman to serve on an advisory committee on meat and poultry inspection.

the result of *E. coli* in an undercooked burger.

"When you are sitting across from a mother who has lost a son, you can't say, 'this rarely happens' or that only one death from it happens in every so many million so it isn't cause for alarm. That mother has lost a son. I feel for her."

"At the same time, I have to ask the question: 'Why did those children die?'"

According to Stoltzfus, it wasn't the meat industry's fault. It was the restaurants' failure to properly cook the meat that resulted in the deaths. If the meat had been fully cooked, the bacteria causing the *E. coli* would have been destroyed,

and the deaths would not have happened, not even illness.

Stoltzfus sees a great need for sanitation and proper cooking

say it, but that's reality," Stoltzfus said regarding the uproar created when several children died from eating undercooked hamburgers.

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methods to be followed through in the food service end of the spectrum. He isn't pointing fingers. He is, after all, part owner of Stoltzfus Farm Restaurant, where family-styled meals are served in an authentic Amish homestead.

"My number one concern is food safety. But if government regulations are aimed entirely at the meat industry in order to prevent a child from getting *E. coli*—they are dead wrong. It will probably happen again. I don't like to

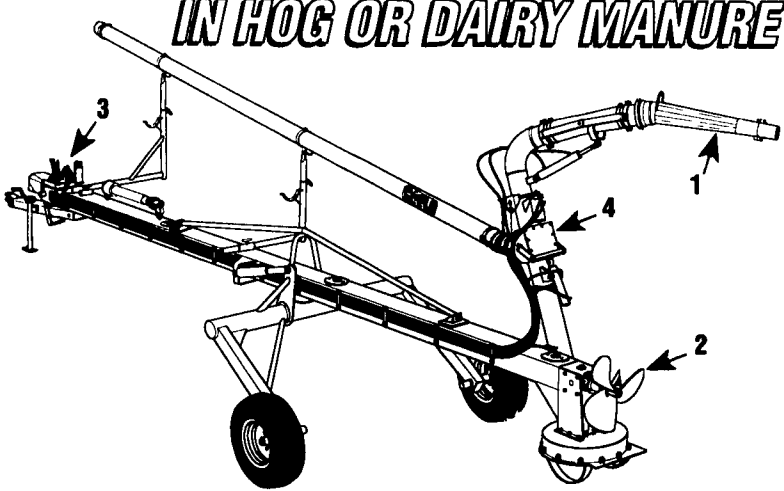
"The meat industry is willing to do our part, but others need to be aware of the problem and carry equal responsibility," Stoltzfus said of food preparation, which he considers the weak link in preventing foodborne illnesses.

"Where does personal responsibility come into play?" he asked. "That mother wants zero tolerance, but I'm not sure that's achievable, although we can minimize the risks. We cannot live

(Turn to Page A26)

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