

# NCGA Leadership Academy Update

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Vice President, PCGA

This past year I participated in two NCGA Leadership Academies. These were professionally conducted, first-class events sponsored by the National Corn Growers Association and Syngenta. The purposes of the academies were to develop improved and new leadership and to teach effective lobbying skills.

The first event I attended was conducted Aug. 21-24 in Greensboro, N.C. Twenty farmers from around the nation participated. The organizers were especially excited to have a representative from Pennsylvania attend. Many years have passed since Pennsylvania was represented. Grant Troop was the last in recent memory. In the Midwest there are local county grower's associations that take turns selecting attend-

ees. In Pennsylvania there is only one state organization.

Leadership personnel and workshop leaders were provided by NCGA, the Soybean Association, and Syngenta. The following areas were covered: association leadership, lunch etiquette, building presentation skills, thinking in the future tense, media training, and persuasion skill. There was also a tour of Syngenta and their research facility.

On Jan. 26-28, I met with the same group of corn growers in Washington, D.C. There we were briefed again on the important issues facing growers today. A lobbyist panel consisting of the National Pork Producers Council, American Soybean Association, National Cattlemen's Beef Association, National Farmers Union, and the American Farm Bureau Federation made a presentation. Their topic was when everyone works together, great things can be accomplished legislatively.

Even though Pennsylvania is a relatively small corn-producing state, it is important to maintain a rapport with our Congressmen. I visited with Senator Santorum's legislative correspondent, Christopher Walters. I also met with Senator Specter's aide, Michael Oscar. Lastly I met with Rep. Tim Holden, who is a member of the House Agricultural Committee. This conversation was followed by a productive discussion with Nona Darrell, the senior legislative assistant to Pennsylvania Rep. Holden.

All visits were productive and included a discussion of the Energy Bill, the renewable fuel standard (RFS), and our part in supplying dependable, clean, and economical fuel. Unfortunately, the majority of the groups I visited with suggested that an approved Energy Bill would not be forthcoming this year.

Also discussed was disaster assistance. The NCGA believes that aid should be targeted to those who had the greatest loss and not spread uniformly whenever there is regional loss. Congress is considering a \$3.1 billion Disaster Aid Package. President Bush is opposed to the package.

Transportation is also an important issue for farmers that was discussed. The outdated and controversial locks and dams on the Upper Mississippi Basin cost American farmers lost sales because of increased freight costs. A study is being done on the impact of the Jones Act. Currently foreign grains are being imported into some states, most noticeably North Carolina, because of economic factors. The feeling is that the U.S. is not the low-cost supplier because of noncompetitive freight systems. The study will determine if there is an American shipping industry left to protect. Other factors also come into play in this situation.

The academies were well worth the investment by NCGA and the corn industry. Whenever there is an opportunity for positive-minded farmers who are interested in improving the lot of all farmers, I consider it time well spent.



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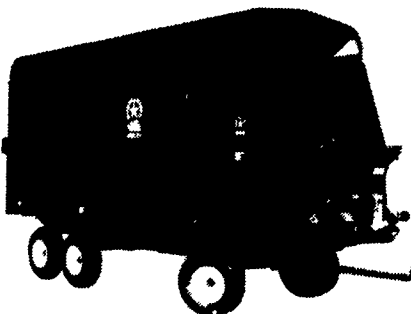
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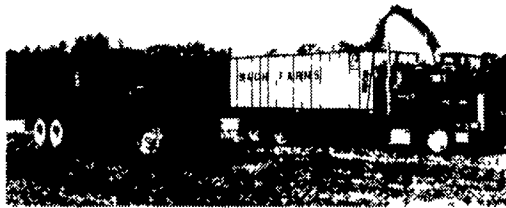
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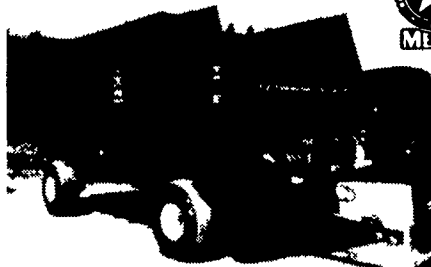


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