

12/16/2003 Entry: "OCM: Cattle Owners Should Attend Historic Pickett Trial"

Lincoln, NE ~ The Organization for Competitive Markets (OCM) today strongly encouraged all cattle owners to make plans to attend the historic captive supply trial, known as Pickett v. IBP, in Montgomery, Alabama on January 12, 2004. This is the first major effort in the 80 year history of the Packers & Stockyards Act for cattle owners to take the law into their own hands in response to market manipulation in the cattle markets.

"This is the first class action case ever brought against beef packers," said Fred Stokes, OCM president. "In the storied history of farmers and ranchers advocating for antitrust laws and the enforcement of those laws, this multiple week trial will be the next chapter. It just so happens that Alabama is a far warmer place to be in January than are the Midwest, Plains and Western states. Ranchers and feeders should take their families to Montgomery for a week or two beginning January 12 to view the trial and to tour the area within driving distance to the Gulf Coast."

The trial promises the disclosure of reams of internal IBP (now owned by Tyson) information, testimony by cattle owners, and testimony by IBP employees. "Cattle owners are doing what USDA has failed to do, enforce the law," continued Stokes. "The plaintiffs and their attorneys have looked where USDA has refused to look, inside the books kept by IBP."

The plaintiff class representatives are cattle owners from Alabama, Kansas, Montana, South Dakota, and Nebraska. They are seeking substantial money damages to be paid by IBP as compensation for illegally manipulating and controlling the cattle market. The plaintiffs also seek injunctive relief in the form of a court order prohibiting IBP from using captive supplies as a means to manipulate prices.

"This case has the potential to turn back the trend from closed and manipulated markets, to open and competitive markets," said Stokes. "The jury will hear both sides before deciding without the benefit of campaign contributions from meat packers, their associations, or their lackeys. We cannot emphasize enough the historic importance of this case for the cattle industry, and also for other livestock sectors."

Those seeking more information about accommodations and dates should contact Steve Cady, OCM executive director.

OCM is a multidisciplinary, nonprofit group of farmers, ranchers, academics, attorneys and policy makers dedicated to reclaiming the agricultural marketplace for independent farmers, ranchers and rural c

