

09/24/2002 Entry: "IT'S THE PEOPLE By Ken Winter, President"

The editors, industry executives, and magazines are talking a lot about the senseless fighting going on in the industry. They talk about how the new organizations are trying to tear down the industry by fighting a turf war with the old standbys. What they fail to recognize and give credit for is that people, grass roots people, are the ones joining these new organizations like R-CALF USA and KCA (Kansas Cattlemen's Association) in record numbers. An organization is nothing without members and an organization that is losing people is not meeting the needs of their members. Organizations that claim their members are not smart enough or well enough informed to make intelligent decisions are missing the point. They have not provided true information from both sides of the issue and then listened for their members input. Well-informed people make intelligent well-informed decisions.

New associations, like R-CALF USA and KCA, at the direction of their membership, have asked for enforcement of the Packers & Stock Yards Act, a vote on the beef checkoff, investigation into monopoly in the meat packing and retail industries and FAIR trade that puts the USA producer on an equal playing field with foreign countries. At the direction of their membership, they lobbied for a ban on packer ownership of livestock and country of origin labeling. The old standbys have accused the new associations of trying to eliminate branded products, but it was the new associations that fought for the greatest branded product in the world... "Born, Raised and Slaughtered in the USA". The world not only wants our product they want access to our markets.

It would be well for all organizations to do a better job of informing their members rather than manipulating them. Why are we just now seeing the town hall meetings and listening tours? Are they answering the questions and addressing the issues? The people will be the judge and will respond with their loyalty and membership. It is time for associations to wakeup. An association is its people and when the people leave, the association no longer exists.