

Oregon Cattlemen's chief blasts threatened beef import hike by Carter

"During the first quarter of 1979 the beef price index showed a little over 6 per cent increase in a survey of agricultural economists from around the country. It appears here could be a 3-5 per cent further increase for the remainder of 1979. However,

what is significant concerning beef prices, which seems to be the main topic of conversation by consumers, legislators, and the media, is that if beef prices had kept pace with the cost of all goods and services, plus inflation, since 1970, the cost of beef today would

average about two and a half times more than the consumer is now paying." These remarks were made by Donald Ostensoe, Executive Vice President of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association, speaking at a luncheon meeting of the Portland Rotary Club.

"What the general public should understand is that cattle and retail beef prices have risen for one simple reason. Beef supplies are now down because producers lost money heavily during the past four years. The majority of producers and feeders during

the years 1974-77 lost between \$50-100 dollars per beef animal. Thus, the signals were clear to our industry—an over supply situation. The basic cow herd must be reduced. In 1973 the total cattle inventory in the United States was 132 million head. As of January,

1979, the cattle inventory was 110 million, a reduction of 22 million head of beef animals. Thus, the situation now is one where we are approximately 12 per cent below consumer demand for our product."

Ostensoe continued, "earlier this week, Alfred Kahn, President Carter's inflation fighter, said that 'an increase in beef imports is worth considering.' Our industry takes exception with such comments, because this type of action would result in more harm than good over the long

run for both the consumers and the cattle industry. For one thing, the amount of available beef in foreign countries is very small—too small to make any important difference in our national food picture. Increasing beef imports at this time, to lower prices for domestic beef supplies, would put a big dent in the economic health of ranchers who are now going all out to increase their herds. Thus, if the administration opens our borders to an excessive amount of beef imports, they are definitely sending cattlemen a discouraging price signal, and the government would simply bring about a halt to rebuilding cattle herds, thus, an additional period of low beef supplies."

The cattle executive concluded by saying, "there is even talk by the Carter Administration of wage and price controls. This would not only be devastating to the cattle industry, but to all of agriculture. It seems ironic that the cattle industry, which asks so little from the federal government, even when times are rough, seems to get slapped in the face when things improve and ranchers have a chance to at least break even or make a little money."

Another point which both the consumers and the Carter Administration should consider. In comparison with consumers in other lands, U.S. meat buyers really haven't much to complain about. According to reports by U.S. Agricultural attaches at various embassies, a German customer must work twice as long to buy a pound of chuck roast if he lives in Bonn, West Germany, and a Brazilian, six times as long in Brasilia, to earn the cost of a pound of pork chops. And a Japanese worker works seven and a half times as long as his American counterpart to earn the price of a pound of sirloin.

Packwood adds to funding for reforestation

The Senate Budget Committee this week approved a motion by Senator Bob Packwood (R-Ore), a member of the Committee, to increase the amount in the Federal budget for 1980 by \$100 million for "conservation and land management," the broad category which includes spending for the Forest Service. The Committee's action endorsed Senator Packwood's appeal that this money was needed to beef up the lagging reforestation efforts on National Forest lands.

"The Senate Budget Committee acknowledged the Administration did not ask for enough funds for reforestation," said Packwood, "and the Committee has rectified that error by adopting my amendment."

"This vote," Packwood continued, "is tremendous recognition by the Senate's budget writers that funds should be invested in 100 per cent reforestation. It's a smart, dollar-conscious move and it will clear the way for the Congress to authorize the Forest Service to aggressively reforest. With this money, the Forest Service can go ahead next year in its efforts to meet the reforestation goals the Congress established."

The Budget Committee action guarantees that funds will be available in the budget resolution that goes to the Senate on April 15.

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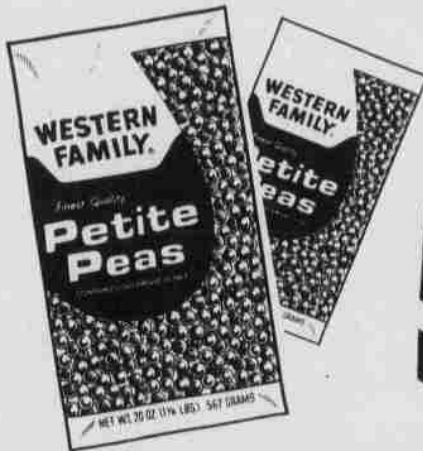
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