

# Opening Session

## Welcome and Introductions

(Dr. Bechtol:) Good morning, Welcome to the 12th annual convention of the American Association of Bovine Practitioners. Now, I would like to present to you the President of our Association, Dr. John Noordsy, Manhattan, Kansas.

(Dr. Noordsy:) Thank you, Dave. I welcome you to the 12th annual meeting here in San Antonio. We have an excellent program coming up. Have fun, learn, and we will see you throughout the next few days.

(Dr. Bechtol:) It is now my pleasure to introduce three personal friends from the Mexican Buiatrics Association. There are about 45 Mexican veterinarians here in all. First, I would like to introduce Dr. Octavio Compusano, secretary-treasurer, Dr. Jorge Avilia, Past President and the new

president, Dr. Rafael Cab.

Dr. Bechtol: The theme of the program was chosen because we are constantly in a change from individual animal health problems to herd health programs. Our first speaker is Mr. David A. Witts, Dallas, Texas. He is an attorney with business and ranching experience. He as served as legal counsel for various state and federal legislative committees including the Texas Department of Agriculture. He has been a member of the Texas House of Representatives Agriculture Export committee. He has written a book, "The Power of Parity" which is available at the registration desk. (Dr. Witts:) Even though I am an attorney, I am glad that Dr. Bechtol told you I am a rancher, so I do have some legitimate business activities!

*Dr. Witts forwarded the following statement for the proceedings'.*

## Statement of the Texas & Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association To The Honorable Bob S. Bergland, Secretary of Agriculture

Presented at Wichita Falls, Texas - December 6, 1979

*Introduction.* The Texas & Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association is the Southwest's oldest and largest cattle association. Its 14,000 members recently celebrated their 100th anniversary. They are honored to visit with you. Rarely can we meet a cabinet officer - particularly one whose integrity and ability command wide respect, both in and out of government.

*Harvest Time.* Today we are harvesting the largest grain crop in history. Why in a nation of 200 million people has there never been famine? How did we convert a hostile land into a larder that feeds ourselves *and* much of the world? Why do we spend a *Smaller percent* of income on food than any nation? We spend, in constant dollars, *less for food today* than we did 20 years ago — and as you point out, we spend less on food than on our automobile.

*American Agriculture.* The answer is the Miracle of



*Dr. David A. Witts*

American Agriculture. A system so *productive* that it released 90% of our work force from the farms to build the world's greatest industrial power. A system so *efficient* that it provides more food for more people more cheaply than any in the *world's history*; plus selling a \$32 Billion food basket to buy OPEC oil, thereby preserving what sanity is left in the dollar.

*Government Planning.* Is government planning going to improve on that? You say the goal of this Project is:

- (a) "to set national policies and programs that will best promote agriculture; and
- (b) "to be sure our farm system is the most efficient; and
- (c) "to maintain our capacity to produce and to look closely at any policies that interfere with that capacity."

Callously restated, that says: "I'm from the federal government, and I'm here to *help* you."

*Results Never Follow Intent.* Removed from the protected enclave on the Potomac, people who live in the real world have learned the bitter lesson that *results* of federal programs never follow *intent*. Unfortunately, those in Congress who pass laws, or those like you in the Executive that set policies, are *not* the people who interpret, administer or enforce them!

*Record.* Look at the record, Laudable was the intent of EPA, OSHA, Clean Air, Clean Water, Wilderness, Transportation, Civil Rights Act, etc. None would have dreamed that such pristine planning and lofty motives would *result* in blocking the Alaska pipeline; or warning farmers that manure is slippery; or building cars that burn unleaded gas; or instant slums; or life by quota; or 25 years of school busing. Federal social engineering has *always come a cropper*.

*Government Land Planning.* Government now owns 40% of all land. What are its accomplishments in planning? In management? In production? It's greatest feat has been to lock up 200 million acres of oil and resources that *belong* to all the people in "instant wilderness" by deciding what America really needs is *more* wilderness.

*Total Planning.* Planning failures are squeamishly defended because they were not total:

*Los Angeles Basin* is the most intensely regulated land area in the U.S. Yet pollution now is the worst in 25 years. Why? The Air Quality Board sheepishly admits "public planning has been a failure."

*Iron Curtain.* There are some government planned agricultures in the world, but you'd have to journey to the Iron and Bamboo Curtains to see them.

*Government Master Planning.* always well-intentioned, always turns out unintentionally disruptive, costly and counter-productive.

*Would Agricultural Planning be any Different?* Not so says the Council for Agricultural Science & Technology which analyzed 84 regulations in 336 situations, including land use, safety, additives, animal health, environment, etc. Findings? "Most government regulations have *cost, rather than benefit, both* the industry and consumers."

*This Administration.* With all due respect, Mr. Secretary, has this Administration performed its promises? It faithfully promised to curb inflation, balance the budget, reduce spending, trim the bureaucracy and never, never increase taxes. What result? Inflation has risen from 4 to 14%, interest rates from 6 to 18%, the deficit to \$50 Billion and bureaucracy has blossomed. Baby DOE was born with a \$10 Billion budget and 20,000 employees. Although it has *not produced* one barrel of oil, it *has* hiked our import bill from \$20 Billion to \$60 Billion.

*Sincerity.* Mr. Secretary, please do not think we question your sincerity. We only wish it were matched by others in government. But what of those who will *follow* you? Regulations become institutionalized. Each spawns its own constituency, becomes entrenched and, like Clementine's brook, babbles on forever.

*Negative.* Are we simply being negative? No sir! Do we argue against the usefulness of planned thought? Absolutely not!

*Caution.* We make a case for caution. We ask that *recognition* be given the incredible complexity and diversity of agriculture. We ask that *respect* be given those who all their lives battle blizzards, droughts, floods, screwworms, fireants — the toughest punches Mother Nature can throw. We ask for the *ability* to foresee that some things can't be foreseen. We ask for *humility*, that others walk in our mocassins before they chart our course, that others will respect those unique *human values of rural people*.

*Delusion.* The insidious delusion of today is that government does it better. Those who pray to that god believe that all knowledge can be concentrated in a *central brain* which plans better than millions of individual inputs in the free market. They believe we should not trust a system, the results of which have not been "planned" in advance. They believe like Descartes — "I think, therefore, I am." They believe they are smart enough to program the future and know enough to achieve it, by force, if necessary. Hitler and Stalin, Castro and Khomeini so believe. Out in the hearland, away from the enlightened burrough of Manhattan, we know that it is not government regulations that are decisive, but rather it is *human values*.

*Suspicion.* Mr. Secretary, we respectfully tell you we are concerned about this Project "to establish national policies and programs for agriculture and rural life." Can you understand our suspicion when we learned the Project

Coordinator was picked from Ralph Nader's Agribusiness Accountability Project? Those who live on and work their land 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, have a lifetime knowledge and a full-time dedication that *may not exist* in itinerant planners and social engineers who serve as absentee experts 4 days a week, minus sick leave and a 3-Martini lunch.

*Prime Agricultural Lands and Family Farms.* Rural people are not sophisticated. But they can spot a con job. How do you think they react when for years environmentalists and other self-appointed guardians of the nation condemned agriculture as polluters of the soil and desecraters of the earth — only to wake up one morning and learn that the Great Planning Machine has done a 180° turn in mid-air. The country bumpkin became Cinderella. The suddenly solicitous all joined hands “to protect *our* farmlands and *our* farm families” — displaying all the sincerity of an undertaker's get well card.

It's easy to trace this litany of concern since much spoor was left behind. A decade ago, two presidential aspirants, Jackson and Udall, proposed a Federal Land Use Plan, *Originally ignoring agriculture.* After blunting their petard against national opposition, the strategy switched to divide and conquer. Realizing that 95% of private lands are agriculture and timber, the Federal Land Use Plan (FLUP) picked on the unorganized minority who *own a majority* of land. The baton passed to Congressman Jeffords from that great agriculture state, Vermont.

As counsel for TSCRA, I testified against the National Agricultural Land Policy Act. Let me favor you with a sentence from the treasury of my testimony:

“This morning I almost floated out of here on tears of concern from environmental groups who have suddenly become concerned with food and fiber producing lands— until I recognized them as the same people who were here last year lambasting agriculture because it pollutes the air; who urged consumers to boycott beef; who urged government to freeze farmer's prices, but not his cost; who would restrict agricultural exports, while demanding unlimited imports, and who are so concerned about ranchers that they put coyotes, jackasses and fireants on welfare.”

*Urban Sprawl.* The concern over urban sprawl and disappearing cropland has been put to bed by your Department, which revealed that:

“Urbanization has not greatly encroached the total supply of cropland, more new cropland was developed than was lost to urban development; land for urban use has doubled since 1950, but still takes only 1% of our land area; we will be able to feed the 1980 population on less land than we harvested in 1973; we will need 36 million acres less cropland in 1985 than we used in 1974.”

*Credibility.* Those who clamor for national farmland policies expose their credentials when it comes to *understanding agriculture* or *defending private property.* The Environmental Agenda is their Bible (sponsored by the Rockefeller Fund, Sierra Club, Natural Resources Defense Council, Friends of the Earth, Wilderness Society, Zero Growth, et al). Their deep appreciation of agriculture is shown in their preface:

“Although this country is a leading producer of agricultural commodities, its agricultural dominance is due more to low population density and an endowment of good land and climate than it is to superior management of agricultural resources.”

and by their *Recommendations:*

*Zoning.* “The ultimate solution is *strict zoning* on either the federal or the state level to conserve prime agricultural land.”

*Tools.* “. . . emphasize tools that can be manufactured and repaired *locally* from *renewable* materials.”

*Energy.* “. . . more human and less fossil fuel energy, including fertilizers from household and urban organic wastes, windmills for pumping water, solar grain driers, small sturdy hand tractors, methane generators and many sorts of hand tools.”

*Redistribution.* “. . . goals call for smaller farms.”

*Solar.* “The energy-intensity of agriculture may be reduced without reducing agricultural yields . . . use of smaller-size mechanical equipment . . . use of sun-powered mechanisms for building soil fertility and controlling insects . . .”

*Pest Control.* “. . . use sophisticated methods of pest control, including natural predators, careful timing of planting, and interspersing plants with insect-repellant properties, such as marigolds, garlic and onions. These methods may turn out to be more labor-intensive than spraying with toxic pesticides, but the yields are high and the effect on the environment is far more beneficial.”

*The American Land Forum is their Prophet.* Sponsored by that same group, the ALF is cited as the No. 1 reference under “Land Use Policy and Structure” in your November, 1979 edition. The ALF analyst is Stanley Schieff, proudly identified as “former head of the U.S. delegation to the UN Habitat Conference”, which you will recall *recommended treating private property thusly:*

*“Private land ownership is a principal instrument of accumulation of wealth and, therefore, contributes to social injustice. Public control of land use is, therefore, indispensable.”*

*“Profits resulting from increased land values are one of the principal causes of concentration of wealth in private hands.”*

*“Public ownership of land is justified in favor of the common good, rather than to protect the interest of the already privileged.”*

*The bottom Line* shines through. Farmland is born again as a “national resource.” So valuable that it can no longer be trusted to those who made it so. So vital that it must now be “managed” from afar by those who know best.

*Recommendations.* Mr. Secretary, if the goal of this Project is really to promote agricultural productivity, there are immediate steps you can take:

1. *Research Funds.* In 1940, 40% of your budget went for research. This produced the Green Revolution. Today the research budget is a skinny 1%, given over to rat assassins and trying to invent a food that doesn't cause cancer. Yet your Department spent \$100 Million to “get results of nutrition programs to the public and we are asking even more money next year.”

2. *Reduce Regulatory Plague,* which increases farm costs and consumer prices but decreases productivity. I couldn't begin to list all the Acts, Bureaus and Regulations that need your attention. The regulatory sword cuts the farmer both ways because he is both a *producer and a consumer* of products made more expensive by ridiculous regulations.

3. *Export Policy,* if any, is feeble and contradictory. It holds no positive program for exports, but plenty of negatives. Your Export Sales Credit Program was cut in half this year, so we watched our export customers take their business to Walgreens.

4. *Water.* Agriculture is a main user of water. Yet water policy, like energy policy, is purely negative. This Administration took a meat-axe approach to water projects in the name of economy (while at the same time blowing \$4 Billion in make-work public service jobs, raising Congressional salaries and letting \$7 Billion slip through the cracks at HEW, etc.) Why not invest in permanent and vital assets such as reservoirs and water conservation projects that would benefit *both rural and urban* America? There's no OPEC grocery store. That ought to be clear enough even for Harvard.

5. *Farm Profits.* Rural America is going in the red. They supplement their income by off-farm jobs, family labor and borrowing more on the same acreage. The farmer is paid *less today* than he was 25 years ago. Yet the smallest price rise in farm products is greeted by political, consumer and media

outrage. Agriculture productivity has increased while its wages decline. Industry and government meanwhile gets *guaranteed annual wage increases.*

6. *Finance.* Simply growing a crop is now complex and expensive, without guaranty of reward and risk of total loss. Yet farm financing is in a vertical vacuum, unattended by such exotica as debentures and public offerings. The Federal Reserve reports that “net farm income has fallen relative to debt. They have inadequate income to pay debt and inadequate equity to borrow. Many can't get loans from commercial sources.” *Emergency credit* should be provided to prevent foreclosures; *capital* should be available for young farmers. *Existing structures* such as the FMHA and F.C.A. can properly do the job without spawning any new agencies. They should be expanded — not cut back — and NOW!

7. *Energy.* Rural energy needs are unique. Natural gas is required for fertilizer and irrigation. Farmers can't switch to coal and can't train all those coyotes to pull a plow. The Gospel of conservation won't help because nobody ever went joy riding in a tractor or left the air conditioning on in a pasture.

8. *Environmental Overburden.* God created Heaven and Earth and He was then sued for not filing an environmental impact statement. The environmental price tag slapped on the steel and auto, on the power and housing industries, has now come out of the closet. Regulators are not responsive to profit and loss. They assume economic authority but are not responsible how they use it. Their costs intersect with cumulative effects. We ignored these effects until factories closed, jobs were lost and homes weren't built. We ignored the energy shortage till we ran out of gas. It would be a terminal case of the dumb-dumbs to make that same mistake twice.

9. *Farm Storage space* is inadequate.

10. *Farm Transportation System,* both water and rail, is inadequate.

11. *Repeal of the Carry-Over Tax Basis* is a loyalty litmus test for all those who *really* want to *help* the family farm.

12. *Predator control* policies issued by Alice in Wonderland reward the predator and punish the producer.

13. *Politicians* like Smith of Iowa and Rosenthal of New York would penalize the efficient meat producers to reward labor unions.

14. *Restricting* hide exports repeats the folly of oil controls.

15. *Senator Bentsen's Counter-Cyclical Meat Import Bill* will strengthen industry, benefit the consumer and prevent dependence on fickle foreign food.

16. *Payola For Public Witnesses* is an unnecessary expense to build a stacked deck.

17. *Range Improvement and Predator Control* funds axed in your budget should be restored.

18. *Rising interest rates* force premature sale of products; they forestall new cultivation and herd build-ups.



19. *Dietary Goals* "whether you like it or not" should at least be balanced with free choice of free people.

20. *Packers & Stockyards*. I was honored to be selected by you for the Meat Pricing Task Force. We worked with your P&S Unit and found them to be a superb division of motivated people, doing a professional job, despite their being plunged under the Agriculture Marketing Service, the administration of which is political rather than professional, resulting in built-in conflicts of interest. Legislation has just been proposed to recreate P&S as a new Congressional bureaucracy *and* with a *haste* that is suspiciously indecent. Mr. Secretary, there is no need for another open-end bureaucracy. With a stroke of your pen, *you can re-align* that agency *administratively* and *independently* the way it was intended, the way it was created and the only way it can function properly.

*Conclusion.* Agriculture is local, land is local and people are local. To ignore this in a burst of energetic bureaucracy will subject America to a calamitous miscalculation.

As Christmas approaches, the most appropriate benediction we can offer is the Cowboy's Prayer:

**"I'm just a sinful cowpoke, Lord — ain't got no business prayin' —**

**But still I hope You'll ketch a word or two of what I'm sayin':**

**We speak of Merry Christmas, Lord — I reckon You'll agree**

**There ain't no Merry Christmas for nobody that ain't free.**

**So one thing more I'll ask You, Lord: just help us what You can**

**To save some seeds of freedom for the future sons of man!"**

Respectfully submitted,  
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*Greetings From Mexico*