

ELIMINATING ROADBLOCKS TO GREATER PRODUCTIVITY - INTRODUCTION

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Sets the groundwork for discussion of the subject: eliminating roadblocks to productivity.

We've come a long way, baby, a long way--from the 4-H Center in Chevy Chase, Maryland, to the Copley Plaza in Boston. Yes, we've come from how to operate an efficient produce department in a supermarket, to how to establish an efficient world-wide food system. That's a long way in 15 years.

Since a number of the panel members were unable to be with us during the entire session, let me quickly update you on what has been happening and what has been said.

Ray Goldberg and his panel described the world food revolution, the U.S.'s change from a surplus to a deficit food economy, and the burial of the "cheap food policy". Goldberg pointed out that it's a new "ballgame" and many of the old guidelines such as a one percent change in supply will affect price two percent up or down are no longer applicable. He also challenged all of us to aid in the development of a workable world food system.

Gordon Bloom and his panel reminded us of the need to overcome the "productivity crisis" if we are to make available a plentiful supply of food and fiber at reasonable prices. Bloom pointed out that at the supermarket level, improvements in productivity were noticeable by their absence in recent years, with transportation and labor

costs being the culprits. But he gave government, consumers, and policy makers their fair share of the blame.

Bloom challenged labor-management-government to come up with a cooperative effort that would allow the U.S. to achieve individual, firm, industry, and national productivity objectives.

During these sessions, we had some interesting personal encounters such as Eunice Howe's request for "early participation" by consumers in new developments such as the electronic front-end system. First National's Alan Haberman's rebuttal did little to change her opinion.

John Fox's challenge to the regulators and legislators to think before they act pinpointed several environmental actions and their consequences.

Jack Francis told us that basically the world's food supply was coming not from the sea or some other exotic source such as petroleum but from our commercial farms

Then we had a tour of two establishments that represent "great technological advancements", the Stop and Shop centralized meat cutting plant and the New England Grocery Supply's mechanized warehouse, both representing tremendous capital investments for achieving the objective of "better serving their customers". It became quite apparent that neither was achieving its "advertised" potential. The central meat operation still is giving consumers meat that has

little shelf life left and the warehouse still has a long way to go in providing its retail customers cases of products with the accuracy and productivity hoped for.

Yes, these sessions and experiences left all of us with the challenge of "How to Overcome Roadblocks to Greater productivity". How to hear from the panel.

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