



BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

AMERICAN SOD PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION

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APRIL / MAY, 1988

FEDERAL JUDGE RULES IN ASPA FAVOR, IMMIGRATION SUIT TO REMAIN IN ILLINOIS

At least a small victory can be recorded in the law suit seeking to have turfgrass sod included in the definition of perishable commodities. Federal District Judge Roszkowski ruled that he will hear the case in Illinois, denying the government defendant's motion to move the case to Washington, D.C.

Attorneys representing the U.S. Ag and State Departments, as well as the Immigration and Naturalization Service had sought to move the case to D.C., where it may have been combined with other law suits. Attorneys for ASPA, the Sod Growers Association of Mid-America, and others involved in the suit objected on the grounds of the courts ability to hear the case in Illinois and the extreme increases in cost this would cause the plaintiffs.

While every effort is being made to expedite the case through the courts, no firm time-table can be established because of various motions the government can make which could prolong the court's decision-making process.

Funds are being sought from all ASPA members to help defray the estimated \$20,000-\$25,000 legal costs of this suit. See back page for response form. YOUR DOLLARS WILL HELP. PLEASE JOIN IN THIS CAUSE TODAY WITH YOUR \$\$\$\$.

'87 CONSTRUCTION SHOWS WEAKNESS. FEW AREAS REPORT GAIN IN HOUSING

According to industry analysts at F.W. Dodge, new housing starts for 1987 were down 14% across the U.S., with only three of the top 10 metro areas showing yearly increases. Such trends are of significance to the sod industry because of the increased use of sod at new home sites, with sod sales typically following housing starts 12 to 18 months.

"In 1988, the apartment surplus--a hangover from early '80's tax shelters--still persists," noted Dodge VP George Christie, "but the decline of interest rates since the stock market correction has improved this year's outlook for single family homebuilding."

The 25 most active areas for residential construction in the U.S. according to Dodge were, (alphabetic order, followed by the percentage of change 1986 to 87): Anaheim/Santa Ana, CA -18%; Atlanta, GA, -12%; Baltimore, MD, -23%; Boston/Brockton, MA -7%; Chicago, IL -6%; Dallas, TX -47%; Detroit, MI +1%; Ft. Lauderdale, Pompano, FL -20%; Kansas City, MO/KS -25%; Las Vegas, NV +3%; Los Angeles/Long Beach, CA -32%; Miami/Hialeah, FL +1%; Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN -5%; New York, NY -4%; Oakland, CA -10%; Orlando, FL -9%; Philadelphia, PA/NJ +1%; Phoenix, AZ -37%; Riverside/San Bernardino, CA -20%; Sacramento, CA -7%; San Diego CA -34%; Seattle, WA +1%; Tampa/Clearwater, FL -30%; Washington, DC/MD/VA +1%; West Palm Beach/Boca/Delray, FL -9%.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE SIGNS CAN LEAD TO DETECTION/TREATMENT

Dealing with substance abuse can be extremely difficult, but identifying its existence as early as possible can be of major benefit, both to the individual involved and the family or business that must deal with this issue.

Some of the more easily recognized signs of abuse include:

- ...Mood swings and overt hostility
- ...Deteriorating work performance
- ...Unusually high claims for sickness benefits
- ...Increase in accidents, on and off the job
- ...Excessive absenteeism, unexplained absences.

If abuse is believed to be present, contact physicians and private or public organizations in the area who are recognized for their work and support. Specific courses of appropriate action can be developed for individuals based on the recommendations of these professionals.

Substance abuse is not something that will cure itself if ignored. Direct and positive action, taken as early as possible, will help the individual and those directly affected by this problem.

BECOME AGGRESSIVE IN EMPLOYEE HIRING AND RETENTION PRACTICES

Prepared by Ronald Nixon, Chairman
ASPA Business Management Committee

Predictions about business are helpful in your planning, but they many times are based on variable factors. One prediction that is based on solid evidence is the fact that our labor force is shrinking. With people having fewer children, the restrictions of illegal aliens, it will be difficult to find enough people to staff our operations. This fact really comes home when you realize that your work force for the next 20 years has already been born. You must become more aggressive in seeking and hiring new employees. We must look past the traditional male employee. Our future work force may include more older workers, more women and more minorities. Why not direct our new aggressive hiring practices at improving the quality of our work force? There will be good, motivated employees out there, but there will be fewer of them and we will have much more competition for them from other industries.

At the same time, it is just as important to keep the good employees we now have. While a person's wage will always be important, traditional employee benefits such as retirement and insurance programs do work and it may be necessary to retain employees. Non-traditional employee benefits may be developed that could be very helpful. Involvement of employees may bring out ideas and needs that management would never have thought of.

Bad personal feelings between employees can be detrimental to a positive working environment. Although we often have no control over these situations we can help eliminate the problems by making sure our employees have a structured authority system and they know where their position is in this.

As owner and manager, part of our identity and self-worth is realized from our work. Our employees should also have their opportunity to develop pride and self-worth for their work. The attitude that it is their company should be verbally expressed, but more important it should be acted upon. The employees could be kept informed about the direction of the company. They could be involved in decisions that apply to their work area. (Such as having the truck driver involved in the purchase of the truck or the cutting crew foreman involved in the harvesting equipment purchase.) If an employee can find the personal pride in his company then the good of the company will be one of this main concerns.

It is a fact that you will spend more time, energy and money in finding and keeping employees in the future. It is never to early to start, for the successful sod farm in your area may be the one with the best employees.

NEGOTIATE, QUESTION AND SERVE
TO IMPROVE SALES AND PROFITS

"Win-Win Negotiation" is a common phrase, but putting it into practice can present problems and confusion, especially when the customer is asking for a lower selling price. The next time a customer wants a price cut, try some of these responses:

1. I may be able to lower the price, if you can order 200 instead of 100.
2. We'll accept your figure, if you pay half now and half on delivery.
3. Okay, you bring in your own trucks and we'll agree to a reduction.
4. I'll agree to your price, if you can arrange for my representative to meet your counterpart in your new region.
5. If you agree to also buy our _____ (additional product), for this job, we can reduce the total cost to something a lot closer to your numbers.

You can also use questions about your firm's performance to obtain valuable feedback to future improvements. For example, you might ask:

1. What has My Company done to help you at a site? Is there anything more we could/should be doing?
2. When we (name latest improvement) we thought it would help out in (name area of his business). I was just wondering if it had any effect for you? Is there something else we could try?

-----complete and mail today-----

IMMIGRATION/PERISHABLE COMMODITY LAW SUIT...FUND RAISING

My check, made payable to the SOD GROWERS ASSOCIATION OF MID-AMERICA, is enclosed to assist in the law suit regarding sod as a perishable commodity. I understand that this contribution will not be considered a tax deductible charitable contribution, but will be a business tax deduction for U.S. federal tax purposes.

Name _____
 Firm _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Amount of enclosed contribution \$ _____

I understand that all funds raised in this effort will be directed toward costs incurred in this law suit and that should excess funds be generated, it will be contributed directly and specifically to the funding of ASPA Research.

Send to: ASPA, 1855-A Hicks Rd., Rolling Meadows, IL 60008