

22SHORTGRASS.DOC

*(Note: Monte Noelke is recuperating from major surgery, so until he mans the keyboard again, we thought we would pull some Shortgrass Country from the files.)*

In case you didn't notice, or are so accustomed to demonstrations that you no longer pay any mind to them, you may have overlooked the significance of the Easter Sunday protest staged at the LBJ Ranch down at Johnson City.

The protesters there are now part of history, for they are the very first demonstrators ever to stage a sit-in against a ranch. Never before has anybody paid enough attention to a rancher to want to recline on the hard ground just to show displeasure at something he did or said.

This is the case unless you want to stretch the point to include the last Indian scraps of the 1880s, which were actually more of a shoot-in or burn-out than a sit-in or stand-around.

Otherwise, Easter Sunday marked a breakthrough for the ranch industry. This small crowd of dissatisfied citizens opened the way for greater things. No doubt we ranchers soon will be in pace with the rest of the country, even though we have been fully integrated for years and don't have as much influence over domestic or foreign policies as

a tadpole does over the situation of the water trough he calls home.

It's hard to understand how we have gone unnoticed so long by protesters, considering how resourceful this element has become in finding new fields of action. These boys have discovered and rallied against chili joints unknown to the most traveled truck drivers. They've made officeholders, from constable to President, so conscious of their statements and moderate in their viewpoint that baseball teams are having difficulty finding a politician who will take one side of the grandstand long enough to throw in the opening ball.

But, looking back over the past few years, you find several instances wherein the protesters missed a chance to do something dramatic. For example, there was the time a small group gained wide publicity by pretending to be incensed over the fact that millions of head of livestock were wandering around the country unclothed.

Fortunately, before this turned into a crusade that would certainly have attracted every demonstrator in the nation, bathing attire for humans became so scanty that the animals were forgotten. Nobody knows exactly what happened to the original movement, but presumably the dissident

group began to sweat the beaches and found there were other things to think about than, say, pantless horses.

Then there was the Bracero program, and the time we got off in deep water by trying to protect our lamb and kid crops against the golden eagle. Heaven knows what might have ensued if ranchers had really incited the eagle preservers. As anybody knows who has ever ordered a packet of bird pictures from a baking soda company, the Audubon Society has the money and time to stage a catered sit-in that would seem longer than a combination style show and piano recital on a warm July afternoon.

We've been plenty lucky, but no one can say how long we'll be safe. There may come a day when the perimeters of a four-section ranch are so trampled by the feet and crushed by the bottoms of raging protesters that the only forage left erect will be the needle grass stuck in their tennis shoes and ankle socks. Who can say when a bearded youth will leap onto a coffee house table and shout a curse in our direction for the way we treated the screwworm fly, thus setting a horde of veteran demonstrators against us? -

(4/29/65)