The CHOICES debate over the Knutson, Taylor, Penson and Smith (KTPS) chemical study (Fourth Quarter 1990 CHOICES and Letters, First Quarter 1991 CHOICES) raises several fundamental issues concerning the editorial process of a magazine sponsored by a professional association. These issues pertain to: (a) the ability of a magazine like CHOICES to mold perceptions in the minds of those not familiar with the broad literature on a particular topic, and (b) the need for an editorial policy that seeks verification of the accuracy of major accusations leveled at the work of others prior to publication, or seeks to automatically invite a rebuttal from the accused.

**Publication Policy**

The “chemical wars” debate in CHOICES reveals both the strengths and weaknesses of this magazine as a forum for policy

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**CHOICES FOR THE**

**A COMPETITION sponsored by the American**

The American Agricultural Economics Association announces a manuscript competition focused on prospective food, farm, and resource issues.

Winning submissions will be announced at the 1992 Annual Meeting of the Association and be featured in the Third Quarter 1992 issue of CHOICES.

Also at that time Five Special Awards will be announced:
- The Best One to Two Page (magazine) Article
- The Best One Page Commentary/Opinion
- The Best Three to Four Page Article
- The Best Humor Piece (including cartoons and illustrations)
- The Best Student Entry (Full-time student in 1991-92 school year.)

**Eligibility:** Everyone is eligible to participate in the competition, whether or not they are members of the American Agricultural Economics Association.

Wanted are writers with diverse occupations and backgrounds including those involved in government; industry; rural services, such as communications, health care, education and crop consulting; academia; farming; nonfarm employment in rural areas; and volunteer and other organizations such as farm and environmental groups.

**Selection Criteria:** Desired are papers on diverse subjects and of varied length that will appeal to CHOICES’ readers, the people who make a difference with food, farm and resource issues and related policies. Possible topics include, but are not limited to, food labeling, farm labor, free trade arrangements, agribusiness management strategies, and commodity policy.

Using the criteria listed below, the judging committee will select a mix of papers that, in their judgement, will result in the most outstanding issue of CHOICES possible from the contest submissions. The winning papers will make up CHOICES’ Third Quarter 1992 issue.

Specific characteristics that the judges will consider are:
- Relevance of the topic to prospective local, regional, state, national or international food, farm, or resource issues and related policies. The word resources is interpreted broadly to include human, community, cultural, financial, and institutional resources, as well as natural (including environmental) resources.
- Readability.
- Focus on 21st Century.
- Attention to controversy.
- Novel and unconventional approaches.
- Appeal to wide audience including non-farm, non-campus, and non-government.

**Judging Committee:** Selection of winners will be made by a special committee appointed by the President of the American Agricultural Economics Association. Members will be drawn from industry, organizations, government, and academia.

**Format:** Submissions may be of any length up to 3200 words. Longer papers will not be considered. Short papers—800 words—are encouraged.
A "facing page" format adopted for the initial AC criticisms and KTPS response.

Molding Perceptions

Much like a 30-second spot on the nightly television newscast, CHOICES has the capability to mold perceptions many might have about research results or models used in deriving these results. In this light, articles that call for CHOICES' readership to ignore the results of a study based upon the critic's 'assumptions' about a model's properties, is quite disturbing. Critiques of this type should receive careful scrutiny by unbiased, informed reviewers.

Similarly, suggestions that a study's authors have a hidden agenda because of the policy scenarios it addresses should be evaluated by someone having a knowledge of the literature. The results from our previous studies on chemical bans, restrictions and IPM—which by the way have appeared in AJAE and ten other peer reviewed journals, and which were funded by such diverse groups as the USDA, EPA, Rockefeller Foundation, SCS, farm organizations at odds with the AFBA, and several state agricultural experiment stations—have not changed over almost two decades of research. If we've got it wrong, at least we are consistent in our conclusions, and are unbiased as to whom we misinform! It should be the editorial policy of CHOICES that manuscripts resting largely on accusations of bias and shoddy research should automatically trigger an invitation to the "party opposite" to submit a rebuttal. If this delays publication of a manuscript for several weeks or even months, we argue it is worth it. Such a policy is particularly important to an assistant professor attempting to establish a solid reputation in a particular area of research.

Some Final Thoughts

The format for CHOICES is ideal for short articles on leading issues. In deciding whether to publish manuscripts that report large-scale analyses or comment on such analyses, the editorial council has a responsibility to ensure some degree of verification and impartiality.

Balancing many subjective factors is indeed difficult, but we believe that CHOICES currently places too much emphasis on style and too little on substance.

We argue that articles largely criticizing the work of others should be accepted only if: (1) they have some basis in fact, (2) the critics indicate how they would have done things differently, and (3) both sides are simultaneously presented. We feel this policy can be implemented in a manner that does not destroy creativity, suppress valid criticism, or alter the timeliness of this magazine.

**21ST CENTURY**

*Agricultural Economics Association*

To protect anonymity during the judging, authors should not identify themselves in the manuscript. The first page of text of the submission should include the title of the paper, but no author name. On a separate sheet include the title of the paper and the name, affiliation, address, telephone number, and fax number of the author/authors. Winning authors may designate use of pen names for publication or request anonymity.

If possible the submission should be prepared with WordPerfect® word processing, using a 10 point font. The text should be on one side of paper only, double line spaced, and have 1.5 inch margins. A floppy diskette containing the submission should, if possible, accompany the printed text. However, neither the use of word processing nor the availability of a diskette will influence the selection process.

Tables should be included as part of the text of the paper. Graphs should be enclosed. However, graphs do not need to be prepared for final printing.

Authors are asked to describe on a separate page the photos and other art work that could be used to illustrate their paper in the event that it is selected. It is not necessary to include completed art work. Photos, if available, and related captions would be helpful, however.

For papers over 800 words in length, authors are asked to start the text of their paper with an "abstract" no longer than 100 words. In the "abstract," include what you would most want readers to remember about your paper.

Timing: Send your manuscript so that it reaches the CHOICES' office by March 1, 1992. The address is:

Lyle Schertz, Editor
CHOICES Magazine
12708 Oak Farms Road
Herndon, VA 22071

Authors who have access to copying machines are asked to send ten copies.

Notice of Intention: Prospective authors are asked to send a letter to Lyle Schertz by January 1, 1992, indicating that they plan to submit an entry for the contest. These notices of intention will facilitate the arrangements for an appropriate number of judges.

Notice of Receipt: If authors would like to receive an acknowledgement of receipt of their paper, please enclose a postage paid, self addressed card. The message side of the card should appear as follows:

(Name of the paper)

Author

"Competition Number ___"

"Date Received ___"

Those individuals who do not receive their notice of receipt within two weeks of mailing their paper should call Lyle Schertz on (202) 219-0099.