

# Chotiner Statements Links Dairy Farm Aid to Votes

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 27 — About the time that the Nixon Administration was reversing a prior decision and granting a 1971 increase in the federally regulated milk price level, Murray M. Chotiner, one of the President's oldest friends and a Nixon political agent and fund raiser, was telling top Presidential aides that "if you don't help the farmer, you don't get his support."

Mr. Chotiner's role as a dairy industry advocate in the disputed milk price rise is described in his own words in the transcript of pretrial questioning by a lawyer for Ralph Nader. The price increase was followed by dairy farm contributions to the President's 1972 re-election campaign that reached at least \$417,500 in a year and a half.

Mr. Nader and his consumer group, Public Citizen, Inc., filed



Murray M. Chotiner

a suit in United States District Court here a year ago, seeking to roll back the 1971 milk price increase on the ground that it was illegally obtained in return for Nixon campaign donations. The case has yet to come to trial.

The Chotiner deposition, or pretrial interrogation, was taken here last Nov. 28 by William A. Dobrovir, Mr. Nader's lawyer. It became public when it was filed with court records in the case this week.

## Represented Farm Groups

Mr. Chotiner said in his state-

ment that in March, 1971, he had just left the White House to become a lawyer in the Washington firm of Reeves & Harrison, which represented several dairy farm cooperatives at the same time he was engaged in raising funds for the Nixon campaign. Such fund-raising by law firms is not unusual.

Mr. Chotiner said he sought out at least four high-ranking White House aides of the President to tell them that "what was good for the dairy farmers was good for the country, and what was good for the country was good for the dairy farmers."

According to Mr. Chotiner, the White House officials into the President; Charles W. Colson, who recently resigned as a special counsel to the President, and John C. Whitaker and Henry C. Cashen 2d, deputy assistants to the President.

Mr. Chotiner said he had spoken to Mr. Ehrlichman and Mr. Colson "personally," and to the others by telephone.

## 'Prosperity' Stressed

"I told the gentlemen that, in my opinion, the dairy farmers constituted a very important segment of the population of the country," Mr. Chotiner recalled, "and therefore their prosperity of the country, the same as any person might be a member of an organized labor unit or the black community or the business industry."

The former California lawyer, who was a top assistant to Mr. Nixon in his 1968 campaign for the Presidency, said he could "not be sure" of the exact dates of his advocacy of dairy farm "prosperity." But his statement indicated that it had followed a decision by former Secretary of Agriculture Clifford M. Hardin, who announced earlier in March, 1971, that he would hold the line on milk prices and deny a price increase vigorously sought by dairy farm groups.

The Nader lawsuit has since disclosed that on March 23, 1971, the President met with dairy co-op officials at the White House. The suit contends that the Hardin order was reversed within 24 hours after Mr. Nixon's meeting with the dairy officials, that the milk price rise was granted and hundreds of thousands of dollars in dairy farm contributions began to flow into scores of Washington-

based Nixon finance committees.

In another deposition in the Nader suit, Gary E. Hanman, senior executive vice president of Mid-America Dairymen, Inc., one of three milk marketing co-ops named in the price suit, has testified that the dairy contributions to the Nixon campaign "made the difference" in obtaining the reversal of the no-increase decision.

Under questioning last November, Mr. Chotiner insisted that he had "nothing to do with those people [the dairy farm cooperatives] making contributions." He was interested only in the dairy farmers' votes, he said.

But he also acknowledged that, before the price level reversal was announced on March

25, he knew of the dairymen's plans to make large contributions to the Nixon campaign. Mr. Chotiner said that he was instrumental in arranging for the contributions to be channeled through about 100 separate Nixon finance committees, bearing such titles as the Committee for Better Government.

Mr. Chotiner acknowledged under questioning by Mr. Nader's lawyer that he had chided the dairy men several months, after the milk price increase was announced because "contributions had not been made I understood were going to be made."

But in his White House representations for the dairy men, Mr. Chotiner insisted that he had not linked his advocacy of the price level increase with

the prospect of dairy contributions to the Nixon campaign.

"So, therefore, political contributions of that sort did not figure in any of the discussions in any way?" Mr. Nader's lawyer asked him.

"I won't go that far," Mr. Chotiner replied. "I would say any time you do something for someone, it reacts favorably at the ballot box. Of course, I had in mind at the time the question of support for the Administration in the coming election and the farm states, and if you don't help the farmer you don't get their support. Traditionally, the farmers have supported Republican administrations except at such times when they felt their economic wellbeing was not being looked after to their satisfaction."