

Chotiner Denies Link In Lobbying, Donations

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Within two weeks after Murray Chotiner resigned in March 1971 as special counsel to the President, he returned to the White House in a successful lobbying effort to reverse a government decision unfavorable to the dairy industry.

In the same period, Chotiner, one of President Nixon's oldest friends and political agents, discussed with dairy men contributions to the President's re-election campaign.

But Chotiner said in a sworn statement that there was no connection between his lobbying of key White House aides John Ehrlichman, Charles Colson and John Whitaker, on the one hand, and the dairy industry's contribution of more than \$400,000 to the Nixon campaign on the other.

Chotiner acknowledged that he had furnished the dairy co-ops with the names of 100 dummy campaign committees and had served as a conduit for the co-ops when they made their campaign contributions.

When the dairy co-ops weren't prompt in spending money they had pledged for the campaign, Chotiner called to remind them of their promise. The funds were then promptly mailed to Chotiner for delivery to the Republican campaign.

Chotiner detailed all these activities in a sworn statement, or deposition, taken in a lawsuit Ralph Nader has filed against the government seeking to roll back the 1971 milk price support increase. The lawsuit contends the price support hike was illegally obtained in return for campaign contributions.

The Nixon administration has denied the charge, as did Chotiner in his deposition.

Chotiner's deposition provides new information about events during the crucial period when the Nixon administration first denied a price increase, and then changed its mind.

Chotiner gave the following chronology:

Early March—Chotiner resigned from White House staff.

Mar. 9, 1971—Chotiner joined Washington law firm of Harrison and Reeves, which represented the dairy co-ops.

Mar. 12—Agriculture Secretary Hardin denied co-ops request for a price support increase.

Mar. 9-25 — Chotiner lobbied Ehrlichman, Colson and Whitaker, telling them: "If you hurt the farmers, you can't expect to get their support, whereas if you help farmers you probably have a good chance of getting their support."

Mar. 23—President Nixon met with leaders of the three major dairy co-ops—Associated Milk Producers, Dairy men Inc., and Mid-America Dairymen. Marion Harrison of the Chotiner law firm took the farmers to the meeting.

Mar. 24—Dairymen attended a Salute to the President fund raising dinner and discussed contributions with Chotiner at the dinner as well as in the days before the dinner.

Mar. 25—The Nixon administration raised the milk price support.

The three dairy co-ops, through their political trusts, then began channeling several hundred thousand of dollars to the Nixon campaign either through Harrison or Chotiner.

When contributions were slow in arriving, Chotiner said he called a key executive of the co-ops and told him "that contributions had not been made I understood were going to be made."