

'71 Memo Cited On Dairy Plan For Nixon Gift

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A White House memorandum submitted to President Nixon just before his 1971 meeting with dairy industry leaders included a reminder of their plans to contribute money for his re-election, it was charged in a motion filed in the U.S. District Court here.

Attorneys contesting the administration's controversial increase in milk price supports that followed the meeting made the claim in a motion filed Friday.

In a so-called "white paper" defending Mr. Nixon's decision, the White House last week acknowledged that the President had been told of a \$2 million pledge for his campaign from the milk producers six months before he ordered the higher price supports.

The White House denied, however, that the promises influenced the President's decision and said that "there was no mention whatsoever of campaign contributions" at his March 23, 1971, meeting with the milk producers.

Challenging the White House account, attorneys William A. Dobrovir and Andra N. Oakes said a tape of the President's opening remarks at the meeting indicated that he may have been thanking them in a veiled way for the financial support of his forthcoming campaign.

Played at Party

(Dobrovir has previously come under criticism for his handling of the tape of the meeting. He played it back for a few minutes recently at a Georgetown party he attended after getting the recording from the White House in connection with the lawsuit.)

According to the White House, a staff memo prepared for Mr. Nixon at the 1971 meeting "briefly noted that the dairy lobby—like organized labor—had decided to spend political money" and that old friends of the President such as Murray Chotiner and Pat Hillings "were involved."

Demanding production of the entire memo, Dobrovir and Oakes pointed to a deposition they said they took from one White House aide about the document.

The aide, David Wilson, testified that he recalled "one tangential reference to the fact that the dairy industry had started to contribute some money . . . the date would be . . . probably the 21st or 22d (of March). It would have been a memorandum from Mr. John Whitaker to the President."

A deputy assistant to the President, Whitaker also attended Mr. Nixon's March 23 meeting with the milk producers.

Dobrovir and Oakes said the memo suggested a different reading for the thanks Mr. Nixon expressed in his opening remarks to the milk producers at the meeting.

Nixon Quoted

According to the lawyers, who have obtained a copy of the White House tape of the meeting, Mr. Nixon told them:

"I first want to say that I am very grateful for the support that we have had (inaudible word) from this group . . . You are a group that are politically very conscious, not in any party sense, but you realize that what happens in Washington not only affects your business success but affects the economy, our foreign policy (inaudible word) affects you. And you are willing to do something about it."

Mr. Nixon reportedly continued:

"And I must say a lot of businessmen and others I get around this table, they yammer and talk a lot, but they don't do anything about it. But you do and I appreciate that. I don't need to spell it out. Friends talk (?), and others keep me posted as to what you do."

According to the White House, the President's thanks to the dairy leaders were "for the support they had given to administration policies."

Dobrovir and Oakes maintained, however, that Mr. Nixon may have been thanking them for "their financial support," which he had been first told about the previous September by then White House special counsel Charles W. Colson and "of which he had been reminded just before the meeting."

The milk producers contributed their first \$10,000 to Mr. Nixon's campaign on March 22, 1971, the day before the meeting. Another \$25,000 was donated the day afterwards, on March 24.

A White House official, who declined to be named, maintained, however, that Mr. Nixon knew nothing of this. The official also sharply disputed Dobrovir's analysis of the President's recorded remarks and of the briefing memo. The official said there was "not the least indication in the memo that any of that (dairy industry) money was coming to us."

He also said Dobrovir missed "the operative phrase" in the President's opening remarks to the milk producers and simply listed it as "inaudible." What Mr. Nixon said in his opening remarks, the White House spokesman said, was: "I first want to say that I am very grateful for the support that we have had in this administration from this group."

Asked whether the briefing memo's mention of the dairy lobby's "political money" might have reminded the President of the \$2 million pledge anyway, the official said: "I can't believe he gave any consideration to that."