

# Nixon Milk Prices Decision Disputed

Washington

The head of the nation's largest dairy farm cooperative has disputed President Nixon's contention that congressional pressures left him with no choice but to approve a 1971 increase in milk price supports.

Mr. Nixon has defended the controversial decision on the grounds that Congress would have passed legislation for higher support prices anyway, and that any veto on his part could have been over ridden.

However, George L. Mehren, general manager of Associated Milk Producers, Inc., which had pledged \$2 million for Mr. Nixon's re election, has told Senate investigators that the congressional backing for the increase was not as overwhelming as the White House has claimed.

"We had lined up quite a bit of support," Mehren said, "But not in my opinion sufficient to override a presidential veto."

"In fact, Mehren stated, the dairy farm lobbyists pressing for the higher price supports were not even enthusiastic about their chances before they got an audience with Mr. Nixon on March 23, 1971.

Mehren had been working as cooperative's just-hired

director of programming.

Others involved in the campaign were Harold Nelson, then cooperative general manager, and former LBJ White House aide Jake Jacobsen, who was then a key lawyer for the giant cooperative.

"I recall that day (March 23, 1971) that I had breakfast with Nelson, Jacobsen and others, and the general feeling was not one of optimism," Mehren said in an interview with Senate Watergate committee investigators. "Nelson wanted pressure kept on Congress."

After his meeting with dairy leaders that day, Mr. Nixon conferred in the afternoon with his ranking advisers on the issue — including then-secretary of the Treasury John B. Connally, an old friend of Jacobsen's, and then-White House domestic adviser John D. Ehrlichman.

It was then that Mr. Nixon has said he personally decided to order higher price supports.

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