

# Dairy Co-ops Gave Last-Minute Cash

## Washington

The nation's three largest dairy-farmer cooperatives donated a last-minute total of \$67,670 in the 1974 Senate and House races, just before Congress tried to raise milk price supports.

Much of the money came in six large donations given in a way that prevented disclosure until long after the election.

The co-ops' campaign finance reports show they retain important friends in Congress but still are suffering from the effects of last year's disclosures of their past political activities.

One freshman congressman gave back a \$4000 donation because it was "tainted" money, according to a spokesman. Two other \$5000 donations also were returned to the dairymen.

The co-ops gave a total of \$239,000 to Senate and House candidates during all of 1974. This was far below their usual giving, and left them with the largest hoard of unspent political cash in the nation, \$2.3 million.

Of the total donated to the Senate and House candidates, \$151,655 went to 62 incumbent members of the House. Not all of them voted for the bill to raise milk prices, which was passed the night Congress adjourned on December 20. But of those who got dairy

who received a total of \$102,970 during all of 1974, voted in favor of the bill. Seven who got \$6,700 voted no. The rest were absent or voted "present." The Senate passed the bill by unrecorded voice vote.

President Ford vetoed the milk-price bill earlier this year, calling it inflationary. Then the Agriculture Department immediately increased price supports on its own, but not by as much as Congress has tried to get.

The last-minute \$67,670 was given by the dairy co-ops after October 24, the closing date for the latest public report made before the election.

The largest last-minute total was given by Mid-America Dairymen, which made six donations of \$4995 starting on October 25. This avoided the legal requirement to report by telegram donations of \$5000 or more made in the last few days before the election.

Had the donations been made a day or so earlier, or had they been \$5 more, the voters could have learned of them before going to the polls, instead of months afterward.

These donations went to Representatives William J. Scherle (Rep-Iowa), Bob Traxler (Dem-Mich.), John P. Murtha (Dem-Pa.), Bill D. Burlison (Dem-Mo.) and Robert B. Mathias (Rep-Calif.), and to Steve Babcock, a Democratic House

money, the aye votes outnumbered the nays five to one.

Thirty-five congressmen,

candidate who lost in Minnesota. Burlison and Murtha voted in favor of the milk-price bill and Traxler, Mathias and Scherle were absent.

The largest total of last-minute money was \$10,000 to Theodore M. Risenhoover (Dem-Okla.), who won a House seat. Risenhoover got no dairy money during his campaign, but Associated Milk Producers and Mid-America Dairymen each chipped in \$5000 around Christmas to help the representative-elect pay off his campaign debts.

Three candidates returned \$5000 donations after the November 5 election. They were Representative Frank Denholm (Dem-S.D.), Senator Charles Mathias (Rep-Md.) and Richard Nolan, a Democrat who won a House seat from Wisconsin.

A spokesman for Nolan said he returned \$5000 to Associated Milk Producers "because of the 1972 illegal contributions" admitted by the producers. Nolan retained \$3000 given to him by Mid-America, but the spokesman said that group "was not involved in illegalities or activities that might have made it tainted." But Mathias returned \$5000, according to his spokesman.

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