

Co-op News

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The dairy co-op that gave money to Nixon—and didn't

(Copley News Service?)

ARLINGTON HEIGHTS, ILL. (CNS) — Associated Milk Producers Inc. is catching it from both sides, according to a report from the AMPI annual meeting here.

The big dairy cooperative, charged by consumer interests with "buying" a milk price rise in 1971 by contributions to a Nixon campaign fund, is now charging the Nixon Administration with retaliation by an anti-trust suit after AMPI turned down a request for up to \$750,000 more for Nixon.

Making the charge before the annual delegate meeting of AMPI here was Dr.

George L. Mehren, general manager of AMPI, which has some 40,000 members in 14 states. Mehren told 1,400 cheering delegates that President Nixon's personal lawyer, Herbert Kalmbach, visited him on February 3, 1972, with his request for Nixon campaign money. Mehren refused. Later in the day a Justice Department anti-trust suit charging monopoly by AMPI was signed.

Mehren thinks there was a relationship between his refusal to contribute to the Nixon team and the quicker-than-usual signing of the suit. Though AMPI had been notified of the suit by Justice six days before the Kalmbach visit, the usual waiting period of 60 days was bypassed and the suit filed two days before the Kalmbach-Mehren meeting. Why Justice waited to sign the suit until just after Mehren turned down the Kalmbach request for money for Nixon may never be known.

Mehren, however, thinks there is a definite connection between his denial of funds to Nixon and the Justice Department suit. It was "truly the source of the problems we have and the background of our troubles," he told delegates.

Mehren also intimated that competitors had something to do with the suit and that they have a "cozy collaboration" with Justice.

"The fact that the lawsuit itself was prepared so speedily and with no investigation by the Justice Department indicated the complaint was drawn with collaboration with private litigants who had legal actions pending against AMPI," Mehren charged.

AMPI is paying about two million dollars a year to defend itself against various lawsuits.

- 28 [?] Jan 72 - AMPI notified
- 31 [?] Jan - suit filed
- 3 Feb - Kalmbach visit; Mehren refuses to contribute
- 3 Feb - suit signed