

F-Park
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'Milk Deal' Politics

(Other Editors Speak)

It may very well be that when the book is closed on the presidency of Richard M. Nixon, the worst stain on its pages will not be the Watergate break-in and subsequent coverup but what has come to be called "the milk deal."

Watergate may conceivably be dismissed, as many Americans seem willing to dismiss it, as nothing more than dirty politics as usual — well, perhaps a little dirtier than usual, but not substantially different from other things that have happened in the past.

However, President Nixon's decision to raise milk price supports in 1972 was something that very directly affected every American, of whose interests the President is supposed to be the chief guardian.

A lengthy draft report prepared by the staff of the Senate Watergate committee after a year's investigation charges that when the President ordered the increase he was aware that the milk producers had pledged a \$2-million contribution to his re-election campaign and that moreover he "ignored the opinion of every agricultural expert in his administration."

His decision, the report says, "cost the government and the consumer hundreds of million of dollars."

John Connally, then secretary of the Treasury, has also been implicated in the affair, allegedly receiving \$15,000 from the milk producers to use his influence with the administration.

The report rebuts President Nixon's "white paper" of last year in which he defended his action on the grounds that a Democratic Congress was holding "a gun to his head" in the form of threatened legislation that would have allowed an even higher price ceiling.

There was not that much pressure on Capitol Hill, contends the report, and in any event, the administration-ordered increase was higher than anything proposed in Congress.

At best, it was a lame excuse from a President who at the time had an 11-2 record of having his vetoes upheld by Congress.

be rejected out of hand, and if it could be rationalized as serving the long-range welfare of the country by preserving the President in office, then an increase in the price of milk was little enough for the country to pay.

And again, unfortunately, the White House is withholding tapes and other documents that might help clarify the matter.—By Don Oakley, NEA

By all rights, the very suggestion that the milk producers were prepared to contribute lavishly to his campaign fund ought to have queered their request in the President's eyes from the start. This is something that a man concerned about his image, let alone the welfare of the people, should not have wanted to touch with a 10-foot pole.

No one has charged the President with crudely accepting an outright bribe from the milk industry. This is an exceedingly gray area, and such a charge would seem to be more difficult to prove even than his involvement in the Watergate coverup.

Again, it appears to have been a case of the President, and his advisors, believing that the reelection of Richard Nixon was the paramount concern, overriding all other considerations. A contribution of \$2 million was not to