

Dairy Industry Gifts to Nixon Campaign Disclosed

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 28 — Dairy funds and other special-interest groups donated thousands of dollars for the re-election of President Nixon in a blackout period when campaign contributions were not made public just before the Nov. 7 election.

Pre-trial testimony in a Federal court suit seeking to roll back a Government increase in milk price supports showed today that SPACE, the political arm of Dairymen, Inc., in Louisville, Ky., gave \$25,000 in the last 10 days of the campaign.

An official of ADEPT, the union for mid-American dairymen in Springfield, Mo., confirmed it had also sent \$20,000 in the same period.

Under a quirk in the new campaign disclosure law, it is not required in the last 12 days before an election to report all donations and spending, just those of \$5,000 or more.

The full figures will not be known until year-end statements are filed by Jan. 31, but a sprinkling of checks coming to light indicates the Nixon campaign used this grace period extensively.

Other donations found in addition to the \$45,000 from the dairymen include the following:

¶The Laborers' Political League, a union fund, gave \$25,000 the day before the election. It informed the Federal Election Office of the donation by telegram. But the Nixon campaign did not notify the agency.

¶DRIVE, the political arm of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, said in its last

pre-election filing that it sent \$5,000 to Mr. Nixon on Oct. 24, two days before the blackout period began. This money has not shown up on Nixon campaign reports either.

¶The Texas chapter of DRIVE listed \$11,000 on Oct. 12 for Mr. Nixon's main fund, the Finance Committee to Re-elect the President. In two pre-election reports after that date, the Nixon campaign did not report this donation.

The two latest dairy donations bring to \$417,500 the total the industry gave after the Nixon Administration, in a sudden reversal, raised the milk price support to \$4.95 per hundredweight in the spring of 1971.

At first, Clifford M. Hardin, then the Secretary of Agriculture, had announced the milk support would remain unchanged at \$4.66. But two days after dairymen met with Mr. Nixon, Mr. Hardin said he had found new information to justify a price support increase.

Ralph Nader, the consumer advocate, is suing to rescind the increase. Mr. Nader contends the increase resulted from the campaign money that began flowing at the same time in March, 1971.

In the pre-trial testimony, a dairy official said Mr. Hardin had come out strongly against the rise at the White House

meeting, just before his about-face.

"I left, I know, feeling there was absolutely no chance," John A. Moser, a farmer outside Louisville, who is president of Dairymen Inc., testified.

Mr. Moser said Secretary Hardin "was very much opposed" and his Under Secretary, J. Phil Campbell, "was violently opposed to it," (the price support increase).

"He said if we raised this price support level, you farmers will go back home and produce milk until it runs out of their ears again," Mr. Moser said. "I might say the President, during all of this, was affable. He was going along. He was trying to be nice about it all. And we did go out and say if we had the President to deal with, we probably wouldn't have such a big problem."

Meeting With Nixon

About two dozen milk officials and farmers met with Mr. Nixon on March 23. SPACE made its first Nixon donation for \$25,000 on March 24. The next day the 1971 price support level was raised.

The testimony in pre-trial depositions by officials of Dairymen, Inc., contained the first public account of what took place at that controversial White House meeting. The sworn statements, taken Nov.

16, showed the dairymen gathered first at the office of Marion Harrison, a law partner of a former Nixon aide, Murray Chotiner. Mr. Harrison then guided them the half-block to the White House and into the Oval Room.

Mr. Nixon shook hands with all the farm officials, then listened as each man made his price appeal in the hour-long meeting. The President gave them cufflinks at the end, but no high hopes.

"We felt the thing was lost," Mr. Moser testified.

There was nothing, however, in the SPACE pre-trial testimony to document that the campaign contributions had a casual effect on the price rise. Often, dairy officials gave only vague accounts on the circumstances of the donations.

SPACE gave \$60,000 in 1971, including the initial \$25,000 after the Nixon meeting and \$30,000 more to campaign committees set up that summer.

The second group of checks was mailed to Mr. Chotiner, the testimony showed.

The SPACE fund donated \$50,000 more this year, half to Democrats for Nixon and the other half to the main campaign committee in the final days.

The rest of the \$417,500 came from ADEPT and from TAPE, the largest of the dairy funds in San Antonio, Tex.