

MILK PRICE RULING LINKED TO '72 GIFT

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Judiciary Panel's Document Indicates Investigators See Evidence Involving Nixon

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WASHINGTON, May 2—Investigators for the House Judiciary Committee have apparently constructed a chain of circumstantial evidence that they contend links President Nixon's 1971 decision to raise Government milk price supports to a pledge by dairy industry groups to give \$2-million to the President's re-election campaign.

The circumstantial chain was outlined in one of several docu-

Text of documents offered in tape request, Page 28.

(CORRECTION) SEE

ments submitted to the White House by committee lawyers on April 19 to justify the panel's request for documents and tape recordings of 141 White House conversations sought for the impeachment inquiry. The documents were obtained today by The New York Times.

The committee brief also asserted that John B. Connally, the former Secretary of the Treasury, had "stressed the dairy industry's potential for

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making political contributions" in urging the President to increase the milk price supports. Mr. Connally has publicly denied any improprieties in his efforts to win a more favorable price level for dairymen.

A White House spokesman declined further comment today on the milk support decision. The spokesman said that Mr. Nixon's position was outlined in the statement he issued in January.

The committee's April 19 request included tape recordings of 75 discussions bearing on the alleged Watergate cover-up, 20 conversations related to the 1971 settlement of Government antitrust action against the International Telephone and Telegraph Corporation, and 46 discussions concerning the milk price decision.

Denial of Influence

Mr. Nixon acknowledged last January that he had taken "traditional political considerations" into account in raising the price support level, but he categorically denied that he had been influenced by pledges of campaign funds.

The committee document, suggesting that tapes of the 46 milk price discussions might affirm or rebut Mr. Nixon's explanation cited "material in possession of the committee" as the source of the following alleged chain of events.

On March 23, 1971, Mr. Nixon

met at the White House with representatives of dairy cooperatives. The committee document said the President "stated his gratitude for dairy organizations' support" and that, while not necessarily mentioning it, Mr. Nixon "had previously been informed" of the \$2-million campaign pledge.

Later the same day, the document said, the President and seven aides, including John D. Ehrlichman, the former chief White House adviser on domestic affairs, discussed "the political and financial support of dairy interests, as well as Congressional pressure" to help the dairy industry. The Judiciary Committee brief said that, after Mr. Nixon announced to the aides that he would raise the price support level, there was a discussion about someone at the meeting advising Charles W. Colson, then a White House special counsel who dealt with various interest groups.

In Touch With Chotiner

Immediately after the March 23 meeting, Mr. Ehrlichman "contacted Mr. Colson, who then contacted" Murray M. Chotiner, the committee document said. Mr. Chotiner died last Jan. 30 of injuries suffered in an automobile accident. In 1971 he was a former White House political adviser and a lobbyist for, among others, dairy industry groups.

During the night of March 23 dairy industry officials "engaged in all-night meetings," one of which the committee document said occurred in Louisville, Ky., and agreed to make a \$25,000 gift to Mr. Nixon's 1972 campaign by the next night.

Late on March 24, Mr. Chotiner told "several dairymen," the committee staff's account continued, "that Mr. Ehrlichman expected the dairy industry to reaffirm its \$2-million 'commitment' in light of a forthcoming increase in milk price supports." According to the document, "The dairy leaders did so."

One day later, on March 25, the Nixon Administration made an official announcement that the price support level would

be increased, the document noted.

The significance of the requested tapes was apparent. They could, if available, clear Mr. Nixon of any impropriety or provide the basis for an allegation of bribery. The Constitution specifies that an official may be impeached for "Treason, Bribery or other High Crimes and Misdemeanors."

Mr. Nixon turned over to the Judiciary Committee and made public on Tuesday edited transcripts of 31 of 42 Watergate-related tape recordings subpoenaed by the committee. But Mr. Nixon refused to yield the tapes themselves. He moved this week to quash a subpoena for 64 Watergate-related tapes sought by the special Watergate prosecutor, and the White House suggested yesterday that Mr. Nixon would not supply additional materials requested by the Judiciary Committee on April 19.

By a vote of 20 to 18, along party lines, the Judiciary Committee decided last night to inform the President that he had "failed to comply" with the Watergate tapes subpoena. The panel has made no decision, however, on whether or how to pursue the April 19 request for material on Watergate and the I.T.T. and milk cases.

Talks With Connally

The White House announced today that Mr. Nixon would reject the committee's conclusion that he had not complied with the subpoena. Gerald L. Warren, the President's deputy press secretary, said that the edited transcripts issued by the White House gave the committee "the facts with which to make a judgment" on impeachment.

Among the 46 tape recordings sought by the committee on the milk price decision were those of 10 conversations between Mr. Nixon and Mr. Connally.

The document said that Mr. Connally had discussed the price support issue several times with the President and that "there is evidence" Mr. Connally advised an industry official the increase "would be forthcoming" six days before it was publicly announced.