

Fund Fumble Told By Ex-Milk Aide

Washington

The milk producers would have given more than \$2 million for President Nixon's re-election if White House aides and fund-raisers hadn't "bungled" plans for taking the money, according to Senate testimony.

Harold S. Nelson, the former general manager of Associated Milk Producers, said repeatedly in sworn testimony before the Senate Watergate committee that there was no real limit on the amount of money the dairy farm co-ops were prepared to contribute for Mr.

Nixon's 1972 campaign.

Nelson blamed the White House fumbling over the establishment of dummy committees to accept the money in bite-sized installments as the principal reason for the dairymen's failure to give more than they did.

"We told them from the word go that we would make large contributions," Nelson said in executive-session testimony released by the Senate committee this week.

"At various times, \$1 million, \$2 million, or even more money was discussed. And had they given us the

names of the committees, they could have gotten much more from us."

Nelson said he frequently pressed the White House to set up conduits for the milk money months before the President approved a controversial 1971 increase in milk price supports.

But he said he never got much action until many weeks after Mr. Nixon granted the higher price supports — a decision that was publicly announced March 25, 1971.

By then, Nelson indicated, he was rather embarrassed that the milk producers' promised contributions had yet to start piling up in the

President's campaign coffers.

According to testimony and disclosures from various investigations and lawsuits involving the Nixon campaign's "milk money," the names of the dummy committees — which had high-sounding titles such as "Americans Concerned" — were concocted by Robert F. Bennett, the head of a Washington public relations firm that has also figured in several aspects of the Watergate scandal. The standard charter for the committees, committing whatever money they collected for Mr. Nixon, was developed by White House counsel John Dean.

The dummy committees, however, soon proved a disappointment, Nelson said. The first batch had barely picked up \$2500 each, in the summer of 1971, when the Washington Post and the Wall Street Journal publicized them as conduits.

Nelson's testimony conflicted sharply with White House attempts to pass off the dairy lobby's \$2 million pledge as an idle jest.

Nelson made plain that he not only took it seriously, but also that he considered it a "continuing commitment" into 1972 that was waiting only for the creation of "other committees of a more solid basis, a more credible basis."

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