

## Eastern Cooperative Urges Milk Referendum Not Be Held

An overwhelming majority of Pennsylvania dairy framers attending a public hearing held by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture in Harrisburg on October 28 were reported to have been opposed to mandatory deductions from their milk checks for the purpose of milk advertising. However, the same informant noted that many of those testifying for farm organizations were in favor of such a program, reports Eastern Milk Producers Cooperative.

Arden Tewksbury, a dairy farmer from Meshoppen, Pa., and a member of the board of directors of Eastern Milk Producers Cooperative Association, entered testimony on behalf of the Association in opposition to the proposed dairy marketing development program being considered and to holding a referendum among Pennsylvania dairy farmers to seek its adoption.

Tewksbury testified that the 9,000 member Cooperative's reasons for opposing mandatory deductions for milk advertising were numerous.

"Eastern Milk Producers, while supporting the individual right of each producer to support advertising programs if he so desires, is strenuously opposed to the adoption of any program which mandates producer support of such expenditures. The survey results of Eastern's membership dictates the above policy.

"Eastern opposes the use of bloc voting by cooperatives as a means of railroading a mandatory advertising program into existence. This is a deliberate scheme to permit what may be a minority of farmers to counteract the will of the majority and force producers to participate in a program they oppose and one which many cannot afford. It, in effect, turns over to the cooperative the right to levy a direct tax on a producer's milk check in a way that not even a creditor or the sheriff of a county can do.

"Pennsylvania dairy farmers already have voiced their opposition to a mandatory advertising program. Before its recent amendment, the Pennsylvania Agricultural Commodities Marketing Act of 1968 called for a referendum of individual producers affected by a proposed program. Bloc voting by cooperatives was not permitted. Before a mandatory program could be put into effect, it had to be approved by not less than 66 - 2-3 per cent of the volume of milk produced by those participating in the referendum.

"About two years ago, a mandatory program like the one currently under consideration was put to a referendum vote. The result was that 54.5 per cent of the 10,000 producers voting, representing 50.2 per cent of the volume of the milk produced by those voting, were opposed to the adoption of the proposed program. No new attempt should be permitted to railroad such a program through under a new monopolistic voting procedure requiring only a simple majority instead of the previous 66 - 2-3 per cent approval.

"There is no conclusive proof that a program of non-brand advertising will benefit Pennsylvania dairy farmers in any way. Dr. Leland Spencer, Professor Emeritus at Cornell University, recently testifying in a New York dairy promotion hearing, noted that in a study he did back in 1963 on the history of milk advertising he could find no objective proof of the value of advertising. Until such proof exists, producers should not be asked to vote on or support such a

program.

"The priority being placed on advertising is totally misplaced. More urgent problems face the dairy industry today and they should be dealt with before a compulsory advertising program is even proposed for our consideration.

"For example, the need for better quality milk made more available to consumers." Another cause for the current decline in milk consumption could be attributable, in part, to the instability of our economy and the general unemployment situation.

"Certainly, before we spend our hard-earned money on advertising, we had better find some way to assure that any

benefits derived from the program will accrue to Pennsylvania dairy farmers. Otherwise, outside milk will just flood our markets."

For the foregoing reasons, Tewksbury said, Eastern Milk Producers respectfully urged the Secretary of Agriculture to refuse a referendum on this issue at this time.

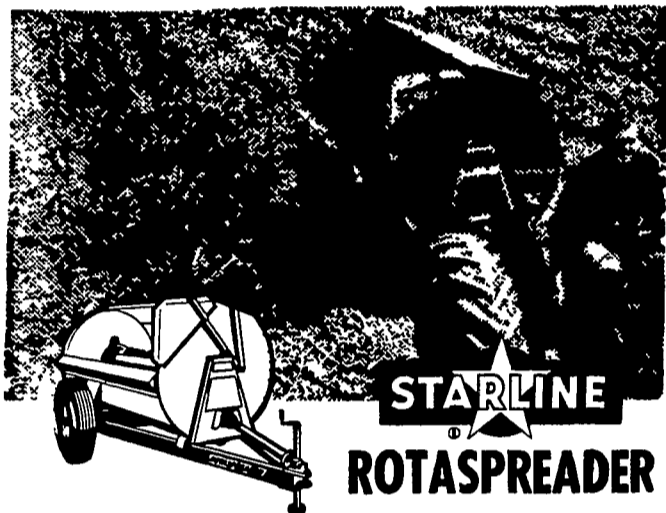
Tewksbury reminded the secretary that in his recent column in the "Weekly News Bulletin", on October 21, he took pride in noting the appearance of a "dirt farmer" before a recent Congressional hearing. He characterized the appearance as "an honest-to-goodness example of what a democracy should be all about". He sum-

marized his story by stating that "someone has to start listening to the dirt farmer . . . now!"

"Why not apply this same concept of democracy in the

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and listen to what the rank and file dairy farmer has already told us in the 1969 referendum, concluded Tewksbury.

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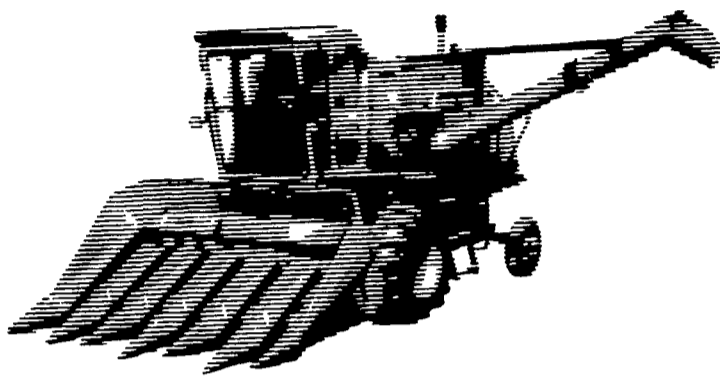


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