

NEDCO calls consumer move 'serious threat'

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — Calling it the most serious threat to the Federal Order program and dairy farmer incomes since the Order's inception since 1937, the Northeast Dairy Cooperative Federation is calling all the dairy cooperatives to band together to thwart recent efforts by the Community Nutrition Institute (a consumer organization) to remove reconstituted milk from the federal order system of classified pricing.

According to NEDCO's President Edward McNamara, CNI has petitioned Agriculture Secretary Bergland to call a hearing to exempt reconstituted milk from classified pricing, thus doing away with the entire federal order system.

"This is a very serious matter to all milk producers," he said.

"Only a national effort by all cooperatives can solve this problem. We should not try to crusade ourselves with the entire industry at stake," cautioned the dairy leader.

NEDCO currently is working through the National Milk Producers Federation and its 200 member cooperatives to prevent the hearing requested by CNI. According to McNamara, a call to unity is the only way the dairy industry can hope to survive in the future.

"The dairy industry is being attacked on all sides.

Its basis for existence, to say nothing of any growth potential, will depend solely on its ability to rally together in one voice and a singleness of purpose," he said.

NEDCO, and the National Milk Producers Federation have requested a 180-day extension of time for the filing of comments concerning the reconstituted and filled milk issue.

NEDCO also recently mailed letters to each of its nearly 3000 producer members asking them to contact their congressional representatives in strong opposition to the hearing desired by CNI.

"For the sake of a few pennies, these certain consumer advocates are willing to destroy the lives of hundreds of dairy families, who would surely be forced to sell out if their fluid milk price is taken away," said McNamara.

"They speak too of consumer lower prices, yet the very approach they are taking would have to involve a processing cost to add water to the powdered milk, a simple procedure that can be done now by the consumer himself.

"Let me explain something else," he added. "Ultimately, if there is only one class of milk under the federal order bringing the lower manufacturing milk price, this would have meant a reduction in the November blend price to the farmer of \$1.29 per hundredweight; translating over a year into a loss of \$8,000 to the average producer...more than many farms even show as a net income!

"I don't think our consumer advocate friends even took the time to consider the impact on themselves and the people who's cause they are pursuing," he said.

"I think it's safe to say that over the long haul, without a pricing structure, chaotic marketing would develop among the dealers, eventually making it nearly impossible for anyone to find a quart of fresh milk anywhere."

McNamara went on to say that short range cheap food policies in the end defeat themselves. "They can only guarantee long range shortages of food and higher prices to the very consumer they are trying to protect," he said.

"It is wrong to forsake an entire industry for the sake of a few special interest consumer groups, such as CNI, who plunge into their worthy causes often with blinders on. They not only hurt themselves, they are giving consumers, again, a lesser, often fake product, with a short term price advantage," he said.

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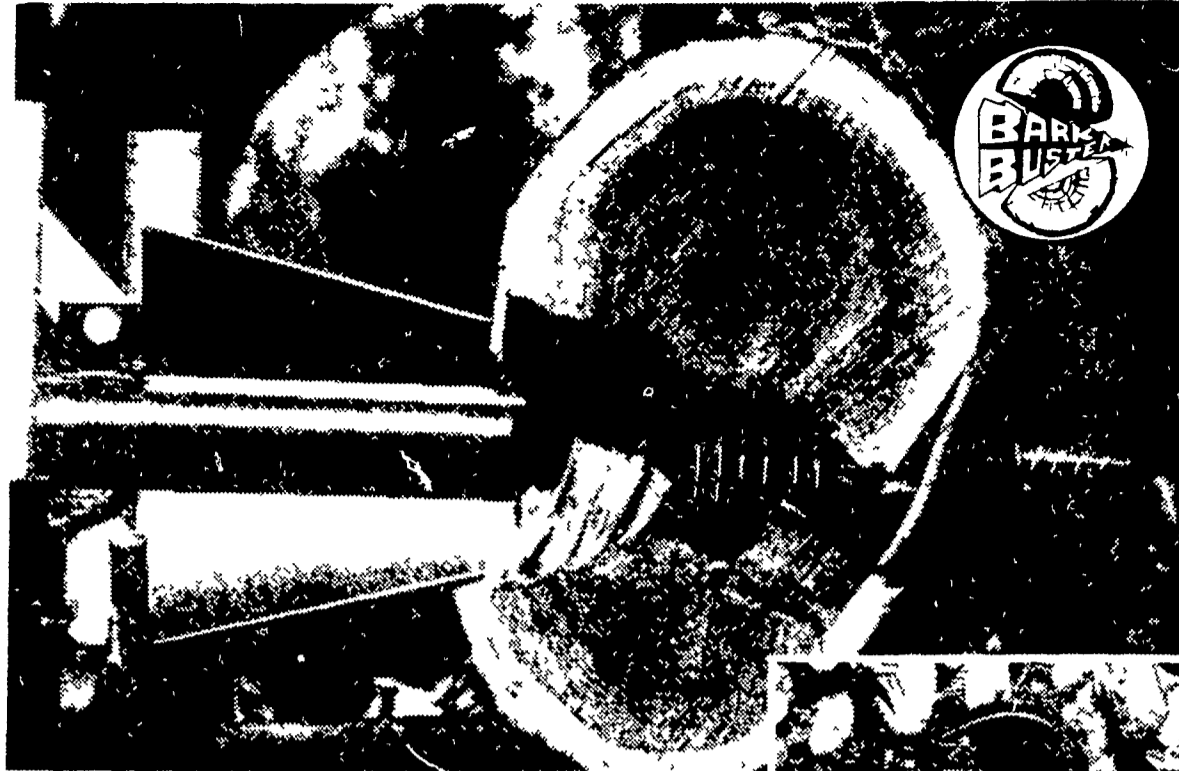
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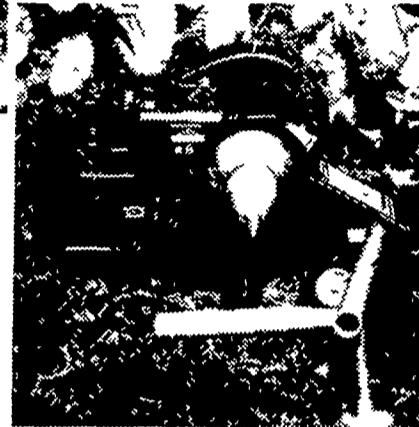


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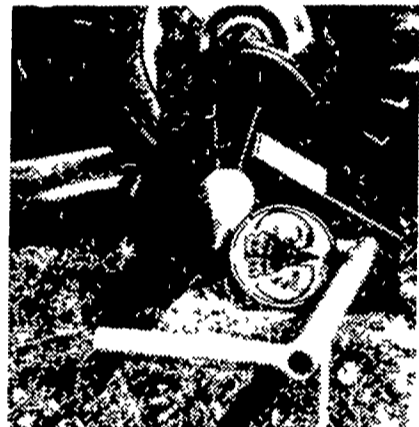
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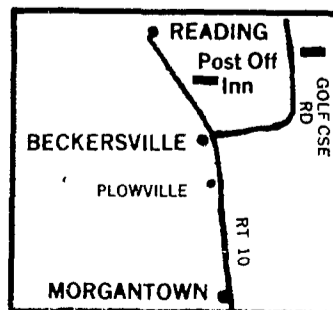
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