

RCMA Opposes New York Governor's Bill

BATAVIA, N.Y. — On behalf of its 22,000 member dairy farmers, the Board of Directors of the Regional Cooperative Marketing Agency (RCMA) voted not to support the current Governor's Legislation regarding the "Dairy Farmers' Bill of Rights."

According to RCMA President and western New York dairy farmer, Bill Zuber, the Farmers' Bill of Rights was originally intended to protect dairy farmers' efforts to obtain a fair price for their milk through "associations of producers" such as RCMA. "However," said Zuber, "the

current version of the Governor's legislation now seeks to regulate the activities of RCMA and its members in addition to regulating the activities of dealers. Zuber emphasized that RCMA does not believe a "Farmers' Bill of Rights" should regulate farmers. "Rather," said Zuber, "the legislation should focus on its original purpose of protecting farmers, not regulating them."

RCMA Attorney, David O'Hara, stated that if regulation of associations of producers is necessary, then a separate study should be conducted and separate legisla-

tion should be introduced for this purpose.

"One of the reasons for the Bill of Rights was that dairy farmers believed that the Federal statute, known as the 'Fair Dairy Practices Act', did not contain sufficient prohibitions to protect farmers from abuse," said O'Hara. "In many respects," the attorney continued, "the Governor's bill is less protective than the federal legislation because it contains a requirement that illegal dealer actions must be 'intentional', which is very difficult to prove."

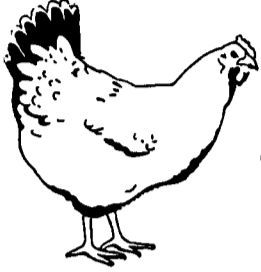
Zuber explained that this legis-

lation seems to specifically attack RCMA," he said. "RCMA would like to support a bill that in no way jeopardizes the rights of its dairy farmer members," said Zuber.

The Regional Cooperative Marketing Agency is a 22,000-member organization run

by and for dairy farmers in 11 Northeastern states. RCMA collects, from the marketplace, a Class I fluid milk differential over the minimum Class I price set by the Government, and RCMA returns this money in the form of "Over-Order Premiums" to its farmer-members.

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