

Farmers Must Agree On Compromise Solution To Tax

BY JIM REAGEN
CANTON — Area dairy farmers should not expect help from Congress to lift the new 50 cent dairy assess-



DECORATIONS GO UP — Roy Garrow, on ladder, reaches to place decorations on the Norwood Municipal Building as Joe Ramie prepares the string of garlands. (Betsy Baker photo)

ment on milk until farmers themselves reach agreement on an acceptable compromise solution, a spokesman for the state farm bureau warned last Thursday.

That may be easier said than done, predicted Robert Smith, information director for the New York Farm Bureau, who warned about 75 farmers Thursday that all of the compromises being discussed in Washington take money out of the pockets of dairy farmers.

But the 50 cent assessment, which he said he and other dairy officials oppose, takes the least from farmers of any of the compromise solutions being offered.

Smith said the 50 cent assessment encourages farmers to produce more milk, directly the opposite effect from that Congress intended when it enacted the program to reduce the amount of surplus milk and products being purchased by the federal government as part of its dairy price support program.

"I don't think the U.S.D.A. likes the proposal, but they're implementing it to get the farmers and the Congress to get their acts together," Smith said.

No Regional Solution? But Smith said that even though the West and the Midwest are producing the larger portion of the surplus, farmers should not expect any federal solution that deals with the problem on a regional basis.

"No program will be enacted that will solve the problem on a regional basis," Smith said. Fitting the Northeast against other regions will only increase the problems of reaching a compromise.

The dairy assessment program adopted by Congress during the last session as part of the budget reconciliation bill was proposed because Congress wanted to cut the amount of tax money being spent to prop up milk prices, Smith said.

The federal government's Commodity Credit Corporation, which is charged with buying the surplus, bought \$446.4 million worth of milk products in 1978, but in 1982, only four years later, the federal government spent \$2.2 billion, more than four

times as much to keep prices up. Those purchases have increased since to \$11.2 billion.

Meanwhile, consumption has stayed stagnant, not keeping pace with the increase, Smith said.

World prices are far lower than American prices, Smith said, offering no alternative because foreign milk producers are paid far less than Americans for their milk products.

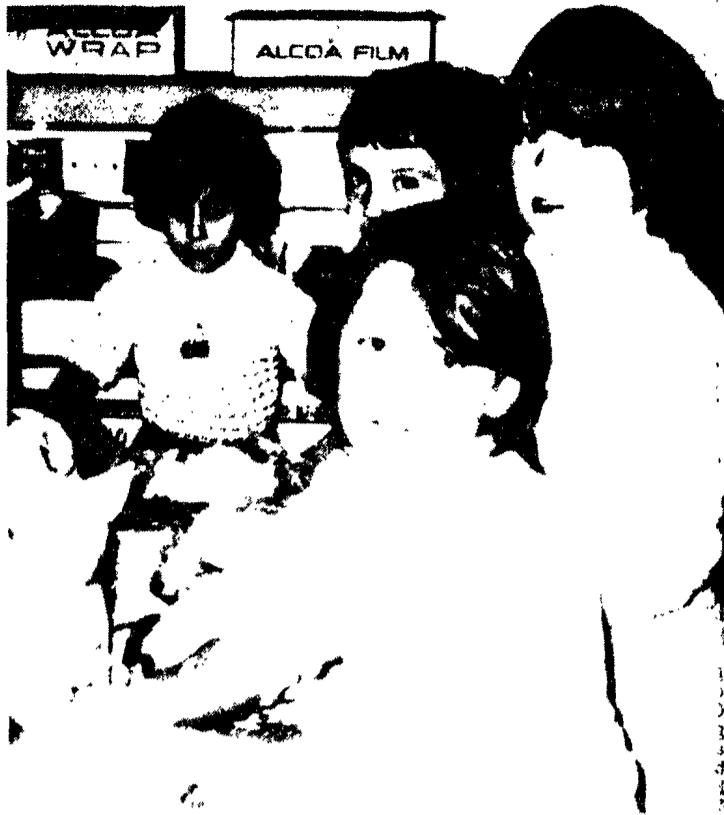
American milk products can't find foreign markets because its price too high compared to foreign produced milk.

Farm Bureau Compromise
Even the Farm Bureau's own compromise offered last year to Congress would not have helped farmers, Smith said. A trigger program, which linked dairy prices for farmers to federal purchases, would have meant a \$1.50 decrease to farmers per hundred weight of milk produced.

Farmers would be paid \$11.50 for eight hundred pounds of milk if that program had been adopted, Smith said. Farmers were paid \$13.10 for each hundred pounds of milk until the current program went into effect Dec. 1.

Other programs also have their flaws. The Gunderson Program being offered in Congress establishes a base milk production target which farmers would have to reduce their production to. Those who produced more would be hit with a heavy assessment.

One program offered would have farmers paid as little as \$6.45 per hundred weight for milk produced above the quota, \$5 per hundred weight if they were higher, and \$2.50 a hundred weight if they were more than 15 percent above the quota.



PREPARING DINNER — Shown above are members of the 3-4 Team at Norwood Elementary School as they make bread to be eaten at their Thanksgiving dinner, held Nov. 19. From left to right are Charlene Collette, Terrie Butterfield, Stephanie Bradshaw and Malissa Hopsicker. (Mildred Jenkins photo)

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