

New Producer Group Now Claims Half of Dues Won't Fund Magazine

by Pete Hardin

Last month, some folks got their shorts in a tight knot over alleged inaccuracies in *The Milkweed* about how half the \$80 annual dues for a start-up dairy producers' organization (tentatively titled the "National Dairy Producers Organization" – NDPO) would go to a subscription for the *Agribusiness Dairyman* publication.

We will offer a clarification, but not a correction. Channeling half of the \$80 was part of the original plan drawn up earlier this year by the group's leaders.

In mid-October, NDPO director Paul Rozwadowski (Stanley, Wisconsin) stated in *The Country Today* (a Wisconsin farm weekly) that half of the dues would go for a magazine subscription. Rozwadowski – a decent fellow and well-intentioned dairy farm activist – admitted in that article that paying out half the dues for such a purpose was likely to be controversial. That's exactly what happened when *The Milkweed* reported such in the November 2010. Egad.

Also in October – during the early phase of the multiple, dairy telephone conference calls in which NDPO engages dairy farmers, a California caller (an ex-dairy producer) asked if it were true that \$40 of the \$80 dues were to go for that magazine

subscription. One of the group's directors, Arden Tewksbury of Pennsylvania, replied affirmatively. Tewksbury also jested that perhaps they should look at subscriptions to *The Milkweed*.

Thus, in October 2010, TWO NDPO directors (Rozwadowski and Tewksbury) stated separately that half the annual dues of the start-up group would be used as a subscription to *AgribusinessDairyman*. But when *The Milkweed* printed that matter in early November, blood pressures shot up! When asked why he hadn't demanded a correction or retraction from *The Country Today* when the story directly quoting Rozwadowski appeared, Tom VanNortwick (editor of the *AgribusinessDairyman* and an organizer of the group) stated that he didn't want to contradict director Rozwadowski.

We have been informed by Tom VanNortwick, editor of the *AgribusinessDairyman*, that the plan to pay out half the dues to his publication is no longer operative. VanNortwick stated in late November that no funds have been paid out except for legal fees to organize the new group. He also noted that the only way to reach the mass of dairy farmers is through the print media, since many dairy farmers don't pay attention to e-mails or faxes.

More recently VanNortwick heatedly threat-

ened to "have his lawyer contact *The Milkweed*" over this matter if this publication did not immediately remove our Web site analysis of the November 2010 article ("50% of New Dairy Producers Group's Dues Go for Magazine Subscription," page 7.)

The group's efforts to organize dues-paying dairy farmers are moving slowly. Producers in Pennsylvania and New York have started their own regular conference phone calls, separate from the national efforts. That may be good, because accomplishing anything would be easier on a local or regional basis than nationally.

Hopefully, this article will offer a clarification. But *The Milkweed* offers no correction. Perhaps NDPO should tell its members (and directors) exactly when, and by whom, the decision not devote half its dues to that magazine subscription was made. When TWO directors publicly made the claim in October that half the dues would go for a subscription to VanNortwick's magazine, that was good enough for *The Milkweed*. We apologize that so much froth has been generated on these frequent national telephone calls, since that froth interferes with VanNortwick's exhortations to producers to join the group, even though its policies and goals (beyond signing up all the nation's dairy farmers) remain nebulous.