

1950

Boswell Stevens Federal Milk Order writing

Arthur Boswell Stevens

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsjunction.msstate.edu/mss-stevens-papers>

Recommended Citation

Stevens (Boswell) Papers, Special Collections Department, Mississippi State University

This Document is brought to you for free and open access by the Manuscripts Division at Scholars Junction. It has been accepted for inclusion in Boswell Stevens Papers by an authorized administrator of Scholars Junction. For more information, please contact scholcomm@msstate.libanswers.com.

I am Roswell Stevens, President of the Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation.

The Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation is a federation of 82 county Farm Bureaus, representing a membership in excess of 30,000. Farm Bureau is a peculiar organization, one membership entitles the entire family ~~to all rights and privileges~~ ^{to all rights and privileges} of the organization. Using the national figures of rural family size, we estimate that we represent in the neighborhood of 100,000 farm people in Mississippi.

I am also a farmer, living 11 miles northeast of Macon, Mississippi, in what is commonly known as the prairie belt of Mississippi. This prairie section of Alabama and Mississippi is rather peculiar in its formation, beginning at a point around Montgomery, Alabama and extending in a westerly direction approximately along Highway 82 to York, Alabama, and thence in a northwesterly direction from York, Alabama and Montgomery, Alabama, to a point at or around Tupelo, Mississippi, forming a triangle in which there is considerable lime in the soil and conducive to good livestock production. I am classified as a general farmer, producing cotton, beef, cattle, sheep and I am a Grade A Dairyman.

This area was at one time one of the most fertile areas in the mid-south and was known as the grainery of the Confederacy. Due to a one-crop economy and severe sheet erosions, economic conditions were conducive to an expanded livestock program.

Many of us in Noxubee County, Mississippi, have been in the dairy business for many years. I recall when I was very small that my family became dairymen in a small way, the manufacturers of butter first. It might be interesting to know that we manufactured our own butter, under our own trade name, and sold to some of the most popular restaurants in east Mississippi, some of which are yet doing business in the same old stands.

To us it was quite an advancement in the field of dairying when our first creamery was organized and begun the manufacture of butter. This creamery was organized and financed by the sale of stock to small individual dairymen of that area. It was quite successful for a period of time and our stocks began to advance in worth and were finally sold by the small dairymen to people of means and it eventually fell into the hands of a few people who owned the business. As long as the operation was in the hands of the producers, I would term it a successful operation, but as it was eventually gotten into the hands of a very few, the dairymen became discouraged over some of the policies of the organization and we felt that we needed a whole milk processing plant. Much effort and work was put forth in bringing one of the larger condenseries into our county, and we give much credit to the fact that we had no financial failures in the '29 to '32 depression years and we feel that the dairy industry in our county had much to do with our financial stability at that time.

Progress must be maintained and we took a definite advancement in the field of dairy operation when we began the distribution of what is known as Grade A consumer milk. Some of the people who have participated in this hearing had much to do with the development of the Grade A dairy program in our area and to those people we are certainly grateful for their support and help.

Today many of the best dairymen and the oldest dairymen are now producers of Grade A milk and in my own county, in Lowndes County, and in Oktibbeha County, which adjoin my home county, we have cooperative associations that we believe ^{are} rendering a very outstanding service and I think will continue to fulfill the needs of dairymen for some time to come.

I have outlined the above to give you a progress report and as I see the question that is being considered in this particular hearing for the area involved in this hearing, there is another step of progress.

I am sure that you will want to know why the Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation is interested in this Federal Milk Order as an organization. In July of 1950 when I became President of the Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation, we heard many reports from dairymen, particularly from quite a number of counties in central and south Mississippi, of dissatisfaction. No attempt was made by our organization to take any definite action in 1950. In 1951, the complaints became more numerous from possibly a larger area and at our annual meeting in 1951, after a number of dairy farmers had appeared before the Resolutions Committee, a resolution was prepared, presented to the voting delegates assembled from the counties and passed and I quote you the resolution as adopted at the 1951 meeting: "We recommend that the Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation work with the Mississippi Legislature in the passage of a law to require milk distributors to make monthly reports to the Mississippi Agricultural Department of Milk received and its disposal as Grade "A" or processed milk on a daily basis for the protection of producers."

The testimony of producers offered in this hearing has further corroborated our belief that complaints we have received for two years were possibly justified.

Shortly thereafter, a committee was appointed to work out a satisfactory bill which afterwards became known as the Dairy Audit Bill. Many meetings were held by the producer and distributor representatives, and information we had in the Farm Bureau was that the bill was satisfactory to both the producers and processors and we could anticipate no trouble in the passage of the so-called Audit Bill. The bill was introduced in the Senate and passed with practically no objection. In due course of time, it reached the House and much opposition was voiced to the enactment of this piece of legislation.

As we said earlier, we had no particular condemnation of any processor or distributor of milk, but we felt that we must be true to the interest of the dairy farmers and it was possible that a Federal Milk Order that only covered a section of the state from which it seemed that most of the complaints were being registered, would solve the problem of those producers as effectively as would have a Dairy Audit Bill.

We have made some investigation of the operation in certain other Federal Milk Order areas and generally speaking, the producers are quite satisfied under such Federal Order. We feel that though our knowledge of the mechanics of a Federal Order area is somewhat limited, it gives some needed stabilization to the dairy industry in the area so effected.

For years, all agricultural agencies including the Extension Service, vocational educational system, and farm organizations, have been promoting an educational program to steer our people away from a one-crop economy. In a large area of our state, small farms are a rule rather than an exception and it is believed that dairying is the best supplemental income to the small operator. It seemingly is not feasible to expect a farmer with limited acreage to become a beef cattle producer, but it is felt that with the limited acreage, good management, and a reasonably guaranteed market, at a reasonable price, would be ^{an} stimulant to further ^{the} diverge from a one-crop economy.

It is felt that this proposed Federal Order for this particular area would fulfill such requirements.

We, of course, are primarily interested in the welfare of agriculture in our state, but we have not lost sight of our obligation to all the people to see that they have an abundant supply of food and fiber for their needs that would be well protected and insure the health standards that we are striving to maintain.

On the basis of evidence presented, we believe there is a need for a Federal Milk Order to regulate the handling of milk in order to assure an adequate supply of locally produced milk to meet an ever increasing demand.

To farther qualify as a witness in behalf of the dairy farmers of Mississippi, I wish to submit for the record the public service activity that I have been engaged in from a national, state and local level:

President of the Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation

Past President and now Member of Executive Committee of Mississippi Federated Cooperatives

Delegate Member of National Cotton Council, representing producers

Member of Board of Directors of National Cotton Council

Past Chairman of Mississippi Unit of National Cotton Council

Chairman of State Marketing Commission

Member of Board of Directors of the American Dairy Association

President of Mississippi Unit of American Dairy Association

Member of Original Planning Committee of Mississippi Chemical Corporation

Member of Board of Directors of Mississippi Chemical Corporation

President, Mississippi Farm Bureau Investment Corporation

President, Mississippi Farm Bureau Holding Corporation

President, Mississippi Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company

Member of Board of Directors, Southern Farm Bureau Life Insurance Company

Member of Board of Directors, Southern Farm Bureau Casualty Insurance Company

Member of Mississippi Coordinating Council

Member of Mississippi War Mobilization Board

Member of Mississippi 4-H Club Foundation

Colonel on the staff of three Governors - Bailey, Wright, and White

Member of Mississippi Citizen Council on Education

Member of Mississippi Economic Council

Serving on Agriculture and Taxation Committee of same.

Member of and past Board member of Mississippi Cattleman's Association

Member of Mid-South Cotton Producers Association

Past member State Advisory Board of Farmers Home Administration

Member of State March of Dimes Program

Member of Mississippi Livestock Council

Declared a master farmer in 1949 by PROGRESSIVE FARMER publication.

Past President of Noxubee County Farm Bureau

Past President of Noxubee County Cooperatives

President of Noxubee County Livestock Producers Association

Past President of Noxubee County Refrigeration Association

Past President (3 times) Macon Rotary Club

Member, American Legion

Mason

Methodist Recording Steward

Assistant Superintendent of Sunday School

Member of Board of Directors of the Bank of Macon

Trustee of the Noxubee County General Hospital

Past Member of the Board of Directors of the Noxubee County Fair Association

Served an interim period as county agent

Was an appraiser for Federal Land Bank of New Orleans for 10 to 12 months.