



The Dairy Farmers' Union in Vermont, 1939–1942

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BY NICHOLAS CLIFFORD

For many of us, American agrarian radicalism has been largely a phenomenon of the farm belt and perhaps the South, while our common image of the northeastern farm tradition is that of a proudly conservative independence and self-reliance. Here as elsewhere, however, agricultural change in the early twentieth century brought movements of varying success that sought to channel dairy farmers into modern cooperative organizations for the production, transportation, and marketing of their milk. It was a matter of considerable importance to Vermont, for by the 1930s, some 80 percent of the state's milk production was marketed beyond its borders, and dairying provided roughly 70 percent of Vermont's agricultural income. The work of the Grange, the State Farm Bureau, and the educational and advisory programs of

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the university's Extension Service all testified to this, as did the sometimes differing policies of the state's commissioners of agriculture, notably Elbert Brigham (1919–24) and E. H. Jones (1924–44). Half a century ago, the long and complicated story of these efforts in Vermont, with their intermittent successes and failures, was set forth by Edwin Rozwenc in his survey of the state's agricultural history.¹

Perhaps it's not surprising then, that even in this most archetypically rural and independent state came occasional glimpses of more radical approaches. This article examines a short-lived movement among Vermont's dairymen towards the end of the Great Depression. Here it was that from 1939 to the early 1940s, a small group of Vermont dairy farmers—probably no more than a few hundred—not only became unionized, but joined an organization that consciously followed the industrial model of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (C.I.O.), which John L. Lewis and others had founded in 1935 after breaking with the American Federation of Labor (A.F.L.). They were among those who sent their milk—between a quarter and a third of Vermont's production—to the New York metropolitan market, rather than to Boston, the destination for most northern New England dairies.² While Rozwenc's work follows in some detail the tangled history of marketing in the Boston milkshed, it says nothing of those counties on the western side of the state—parts of Chittenden, Franklin, Bennington, Rutland, and most particularly Addison Counties—that helped supply the larger and more contentious New York shed. Yet the New York market shared with Boston much of the same uncertain history of experiments and tensions between producers and marketers, of the development of cooperative organizations, and of the ultimate intervention of price-setting mechanisms, developed by the Department of Agriculture in the form of federal-state milk marketing orders.

Though most of New York City's supply came from upstate, of the roughly 60,000 farmers in the shed, a substantial minority lived in neighboring states, Vermont among them. Unfortunately, neither the federal agricultural censuses nor the biennial reports of Vermont's commissioner of agriculture give figures on the markets into which the state's milk was sold. According to a press report, however, of the shed's total production of 700,078,105 pounds in May 1941, 78 percent came from New York, 13.5 percent from Pennsylvania, 4.1 percent from Vermont, 3 percent from New Jersey, and a fraction from Connecticut and Massachusetts.³ Much of the shed's distribution and marketing was in the hands of three large firms. Sheffield Farms, since 1926 a subsidiary of the huge National Dairy Products Company, through its Sheffield Producers Co-operative Association, bought from thousands of farmers

who were its members.⁴ The Dairy League, having started life decades earlier as a small farmers' group, by 1919 had incorporated itself as the Dairy League Co-operative Association (D.L.C.A.), becoming a business and marketing organization with its own plants and distribution networks. Though technically it did not sell directly to New York City, in 1922 it had reached an agreement with the third great firm, Borden, which took the League's milk, under the name Dairylea, for its own marketing.⁵

For decades, the pricing of milk in both the New York and Boston markets had been a matter of dispute between farmers and their distributors, and Rozwenc describes the efforts made by Commissioners Brigham and Jones to encourage the formation of farmer-owned and controlled cooperatives to sell their production. Though their success was limited, the system worked well enough to survive through the 1920s. Then, however, the Depression brought widespread distress to dairymen, making clear to them the shortcomings of the usual marketing arrangements. Milk prices were measured by the hundredweight (cwt., or 46.51 quarts) and the price received by Vermont's dairy producers, which had averaged \$2.831 in 1929, fell to \$1.508 in 1932. By 1939, the state average had recovered only to \$1.917, though in Addison County it reached only \$1.762, lower than all other counties but one. Meanwhile, as the demand for milk in urban markets dropped, Vermont's production continued to rise. By 1939 it was 25 percent higher than it had been ten years earlier; yet despite the increased volume, the total value of milk and cream that year was 22 percent under its 1929 level.⁶

How many Vermont farms were lost through foreclosure or for other reasons in these desperate years, it is impossible to say. In fact the number of farms of all sorts in the state actually rose somewhat during the mid-thirties, probably because of a return to the land by some who had earlier gone to the cities and now found themselves jobless. Commissioner Jones thought the conservative nature of Vermont farmers probably kept their level of indebtedness lower than in some other parts of the country. Still, in his biennial reports, he spoke of the declining prices paid to producers, whose fixed costs—taxes, interest payments, and equipment prices—generally remained stable. The result, if not a loss of farms, could still be seen in unmaintained and unpainted farm buildings, and the decay of equipment.

Conditions like these encouraged dairymen to overcome their traditional reluctance to look to the state and even to the federal government for help. A federal licensing system for milk sales took effect in the Boston market in February 1934 (Commissioner Jones thought it a boon for producers), and though it was threatened by legal challenges,

it ultimately took hold. In New York the federal-state system, set up in September 1938, had to face similar problems. It was suspended as unconstitutional in early 1939, and though the Supreme Court swiftly overruled the decision, for a few months the dealers were able to slash the prices they paid to farmers, worsening the already tenuous ability of dairymen to stay in business.⁷

Under the terms of the new arrangement, a New York Metropolitan Milk Marketing Administrator was appointed both by the secretary of agriculture in Washington and the New York State commissioner in Albany, to oversee the milk order. With his staff, which by 1940 consisted of some 190 inspectors, auditors, and others, the administrator was responsible for looking after the interests of New York's consumers, making sure that the farmers received a fair price, and that the distributing companies—Borden, Sheffield, the League, and a host of smaller independent ones—derived a reasonable profit. The task was a highly complex one. Milk, on being drawn from the cow, was divided into nine separate grades—fluid milk, milk for butter, cheese, ice cream, manufacturing, and so forth—each bringing a different price, and the arcane nature of the system provided numerous chances for evasion, neglect, and outright fraud. Yet on the whole, farmers benefited from this new price setting, and according to one analysis, after the New York Order's first full year of operation, the shed's farmers profited collectively by some \$25,000,000.⁸

A few years earlier, after upstate New York had seen a few unsuccessful milk strikes, a new organization was born in 1936, in Heuvelton, near Ogdensburg in St. Lawrence County. The guiding spirit of this new Dairy Farmers' Union (D.F.U.) was Archie Wright, who, though himself raised on a dairy farm, had an unusual background for such work. Jailed as a pacifist during the Great War, he later worked as a merchant seaman, as an organizer for the International Workers of the World, and as a journalist, before coming back to the family farm. His view of dairying was, as one historian puts it, "a mixture of Marx and Jefferson with a bit of the Populist movement thrown in," all undergirding his passionate belief that the small family farm, the taproot of American democracy, was now under threat from the big dealers such as Sheffield, Borden, and the Dairy League.⁹ In 1937, the D.F.U. pulled off a small strike against Sheffield, and a far larger and more successful one followed in August 1939. By then, not only had farmers suffered from the temporary suspension of the new marketing order, but the summer also brought an extraordinarily severe drought in the North, forcing farmers to buy feed for their herds. Managing to cut the metropolitan milk supply by more than half, the strike brought the direct

intervention of Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia on the farmers' side. After nine days, it came to an end, and although the exact terms of the settlement remained in dispute, many saw it as a victory for the dairy farmers.

Though Wright had predicted that dairymen from western Vermont would join the strike, there is no evidence from the press that any of them did so. Granville, just over the New York border from Rutland County, saw some signs of violence, and from the Vermont side came reports of suspiciously large numbers of cars bearing Michigan license plates.¹⁰ Though there was probably little truth in the stories, their implication was that the D.F.U. was a child of John L. Lewis's C.I.O. (indeed it was sometimes misidentified as such in the press), which had recently organized many of Detroit's automobile workers. Yet though there was apparently no interference with milk shipments from Vermont, and though the *Middlebury Register* reported a vote against the strike in Addison County (where most dairymen were members either of the League or the Sheffield Farms cooperative), at least some Rutland County farmers threatened to withhold their milk unless a quick settlement was reached.¹¹

Still, there is no doubt that the strike's apparent success brought thousands of new members into the D.F.U. later that year, not only in New York but in western Vermont as well, so that by the end of 1939 the Union claimed some 15,000 members. Not surprisingly, Addison County, producing roughly 13 percent of Vermont's milk sold (that year it ranked second only to Franklin County) became the center of activity, which also spread to Rutland County, where another 10 percent of the state's milk was produced.¹² That fall, a D.F.U. organizer in Addison County reported that his work was proceeding successfully, saying that while the Union was pleased with the price of milk, it was going to have to be "on guard against the producers being at the mercy of the dealers during next spring's 'peak production'" (the so-called "milk flush" after the winter months).¹³ At the same time, disputes over the precise terms of the settlement mediated by LaGuardia in August led to charges by some D.F.U. farmers in New York that they were being undercut by non-union sales from Vermont. Threats of violence, perhaps more imagined than real, led to a ruling by Vermont's Attorney-General, Lawrence C. Jones, that farmers had a right to protect their milk shipments, by force of arms if necessary. At a meeting of 24 October in Vergennes, called by Sheffield Farms, the D.L.C.A. and Sussex (another marketing group), a "Committee of Safety" was set up and (so said a Boston paper, playing on the common Vermont stereotype) "ancient muskets and more modern fowling pieces came down from

the walls, as the latter-day Green Mountain Boys prepared to defend their rights.”¹⁴

Still, 450 farmers and others crowded into the gymnasium of the Middlebury High School on December 6, 1939, for a lively discussion of the production and marketing of milk and the role of the Union. Eighteen days later, Archie Wright himself addressed five hundred people in Middlebury, and though there was some hostility, he had the sympathy of most of the crowd. Denying charges that the D.F.U. was trying to break the New York Marketing Order, he stressed its concern in keeping the family farm alive at a time of falling prices, warning that if the trend continued, “we’ll go the way the farmers in Rome went, like the farmers of China we’ll be ground down by the landlords.”¹⁵ He returned to Vermont in late January 1940, coming to Rutland County to support Roy Lewis, a Brandon farmer who had been expelled by the Sheffield cooperative, presumably because of his membership in the D.F.U.¹⁶ Some three months later, on April 23, 1940, Harry Carnal, the Union’s secretary-treasurer, told the Middlebury Community Forum that while he supported the marketing order, it was insufficient to get the farmer a fair price. Two months later, on June 18, when Charles W. Child of Weybridge was elected chairman of the new Addison County chapter of the D.F.U., Archie Wright was once again present, accompanied by two members from Rutland County, and claiming that the Union was now at work in other parts of the state.¹⁷ Clearly the D.F.U. was now building up strength in western Vermont, and enjoyed some backing from the local press as well. The *Middlebury Register*, for instance, contemptuously dismissed Sheffield Farms’ claims of its contributions to Vermont’s agrarian economy, accusing them of having “played [the farmers] for suckers.”¹⁸

While the D.F.U. itself might have been prospering, however, Archie Wright’s own fortunes were faltering. His leadership of the strike in 1937 had brought claims from some of his opponents that he drew support both from the C.I.O. and the Communist Party. Now, after the greater strike of 1939, these charges were renewed, backed by some farm papers like the *American Agriculturalist* and others. The historian Lowell Dyson concludes that while Wright was never in fact a Communist, he was, at least in later years, a “consummate fellow traveler,”¹⁹ and certainly there was a whiff of *Red Star Over China* (1938), Edgar Snow’s laudatory account of Mao Zedong’s communism, in his warning that Vermont’s farmers might face the same future as did the exploited peasants of that country. In 1940, of course, thanks to the Nazi-Soviet pact of August 1939, American Communists and Popular Fronters often found themselves in an odd alliance with old isolationists and America Firsters,

and surely it was no help to Wright that the summer of 1940 brought a minor flurry of communist activity and anti-communist response in Vermont. There, in mid-August, in the unlikely Addison County town of Bristol, a crowd broke up and destroyed a puppet show put on by the Farmer-Labor Vacation Committee, a group suspected of communist ties, when it denounced, among other things, the imperialist warmongering of President Franklin Roosevelt. Meanwhile there came reports of communist organizers seeking to infiltrate Addison County farm groups, and a local D.F.U. official proudly announced he would have nothing more to do with his union if the Communists influenced it.²⁰

Whatever the truth of such allegations, Wright was badly wounded, and his own actions did little to help his cause. In June 1940, he stepped down temporarily from the Union's leadership, and though two months later he returned to power, his position remained insecure. At the Union's convention in Utica on September 3, he did manage to fight off a resolution that would have denied the body's alleged communist links (an invitation to a witch-hunt, he maintained).²¹ The same meeting also called for new amendments to the marketing order to bring higher prices, and two weeks later in Middlebury, the Addison County chapter voted a strike if the demands were not met. The threat in fact never materialized, thanks in part to the renewed intervention of Mayor LaGuardia, who flew to Utica with N. J. Cladakis, the recently appointed New York Milk Order Administrator, and promised to throw his support to the farmers.²²

Yet this mid-September gathering in Middlebury reflected the problems now facing Archie Wright in his own organization. After a discussion of the strains in the Union's leadership, Charles Child introduced precisely the sort of resolution Wright had opposed, and the meeting passed it. While it decried attempts to link the D.F.U. to communism or any other form of totalitarianism, it also condemned such philosophies, protesting the Union's patriotism and its support for the national defense effort. Child also announced the formation of a new six-member advisory board (he himself represented Vermont) to oppose both communists seeking a foothold in the D.F.U., and those who would use the specter of communism to discredit the Union. By early December 1940, opposition to Wright within the chapter was carrying the day. Child, together with several others from Vermont, was among the roughly fifty D.F.U. members signing an open letter urging that Wright be replaced as leader. The Union could not continue, the signers maintained, "as a radical or subversive organization," and they warned that farmers, subjected for years to the oppression and abuses of the dealers, would "fare no better as the cat's paw of the Communist Party." Alleging that Wright

was connected to communist attempts to gain control of the D.F.U., and had failed to repudiate communist support, they urged the election of a new General Organization Committee that would include neither Wright himself nor any other nominees “against whom there is substantial cause for suspicion of either Communist sympathies or conduct.”²³

An open meeting in Middlebury’s Grange Hall on December 7, 1940, brought out some hundred farmers to hear the pro- and anti-Wright partisans put their cases. A week later, Addison County’s delegates to the forthcoming D.F.U. convention in Utica received a long letter from Wright, which they mimeographed and sent out to the other members. In it, Wright attacked the open letter signed by Child and others, calling it “a tissue of lies” and charging his opponents with having become tools of the “milk trust” that was trying to smash the D.F.U.²⁴ Though he was comfortably re-elected chairman on December 15, it was a Pyrrhic victory, since all Wright’s candidates for the General Organizing Committee went down to defeat, and his opponents swept the field. Not ready to give up, he called a new convention for two days after Christmas, and there demanded the expulsion of the signers of the open letter. After a heated debate, the convention voted 188–51 to refuse his call for a purge, and Wright thereupon resigned. This time, he said, his going would be permanent: “You cannot call for Archie any more.” In early January 1941, he was succeeded by Holland Foster, who was considered neutral. On the eleventh, a special D.F.U. meeting in Middlebury discussed the recent in-fighting, but it was led by two of Wright’s opponents from the new organizing committee.²⁵

For a while, Wright tried to fight back. Unsuccessful in the end, in May 1941 he broke away with a handful of followers to form a new organization, the Farmers’ Union of the New York Milk Shed, promising to combat the “dictatorship tactics” of the D.F.U. Of course it’s impossible to say what sides Vermont dairymen, both in and out of the D.F.U., took in the leadership battles, though Charles Child and some others were clearly in the anti-Wright camp. Some may well have been troubled by the Union’s emphasis on an industrial style of collective bargaining, and no doubt many worried about the allegations of Wright’s leftist leanings and connections. Still, though Lowell Dyson suggests that Archie Wright’s departure left the D.F.U. split and without any clear direction, the organization was by no means dead yet, and in Vermont, it still had a role to play. “Now Farmers, Go to It,” urged an editorial the *Middlebury Register*, relieved that the disputes were over, and calling on the Union to get back to working for the farmer, while deprecating at the same time both “Communist wrecking” and “subtle invitations for a witch hunt.”²⁶

As the D.F.U. was embroiled in its internal politics, the farmers of the New York shed had once again been presented with a new series of amendments to the marketing order. Despite the backing of the D.F.U. and other groups, those voting failed to return the 66 percent approval needed by law. The reasons for the defeat were unclear, all the more so since N. J. Cladakis, the administrator, predicted that the changes would increase the shed's dairy revenues by roughly \$5,000,000 annually. At the same time, however, he had warned farmers against false propaganda opposing the amendments, perhaps referring to the opposition of some of the cooperatives and milk receiving plants, where the so-called "diversion fees" charged to farmers for handling their milk would have been lowered.²⁷ Believing that many farmers had not realized that the defeat of the amendments would mean suspension of the entire milk order, Secretary of Agriculture Claude Wickard called immediately for a new vote. Though some of the marketing groups, notably the Dairy League, challenged his call, when the vote took place in February 1941, the League rather grumpily cast its ballots in favor, but under protest. This time, the amendments passed by a 99 percent vote, and in Addison County, 697 of an eligible 841 producers turned out.²⁸

The lopsided victory was by no means a sign of farmers' satisfaction, however. Though press reports of increases in the milk pool payments might suggest to consumers that dairymen were doing better than ever, that was not the way many of them saw it. Payments fluctuated monthly, and one of Archie Wright's aims in 1939 had been to secure a flat price for all milk, no matter how it was classified, and valid for a year, so that farmers would have a guaranteed income. Not only did he fail in this, but by the late spring and early summer of 1941, dairymen faced two serious problems. The first was the onset once again of a severe drought in the northeast—the worst in thirty years, claimed a group of Dairy League members in New York and Vermont. By late June the hay crop was badly hurt, particularly in western Addison County on the shores of Lake Champlain, forcing farmers to buy expensive feed for their herds.²⁹ Meanwhile, in addition to nature's vagaries there had come a new difficulty. Though America was still six months away from war, the steady growth of national defense measures (as well as the new lend-lease commitments to Britain) brought not only a military draft, taking young men from the farms, but also the emigration of farm workers to the expanding defense industries where hours were shorter and wages higher.

It did not take long for the implications of this to come home to farmers. At a meeting of some 300 of them in Middlebury on April 29, 1941—called by the D.F.U. but including other producers' groups as well—a

resolution was passed, to be sent to Washington and New York, seeking higher prices to offset labor costs. By the early summer of 1941, according to the commissioner of agriculture, there was a 40 percent shortage of farm labor.³⁰ Yet as workers and equipment became more expensive and more difficult to find, Washington was urging farmers to increase production. In the eyes of some dairy leaders, whatever good the milk orders had done in stabilizing prices, they now served to restrain the amount received by farmers while the costs of needed goods and services rose. "The Northeastern milk situation may very likely be the next important conflagration on the labor front," wrote a dairy farmer to the *New York Times* that spring, warning that dairymen had been "seething" for years at Washington's "untimely coddling" of organized labor, and at the huge payments made by the Treasury to the states of the farm bloc, which benefited northeastern agriculture not at all.³¹

On June 16, 1941, ballots went out to the milkshed's farmers to authorize a new series of amendments that would, among other things, raise the price of Class I (fluid) milk first to \$2.65 per cwt. in July, and then to \$2.88 from August through April 1942. Cladakis reported a vote in favor of over 98 percent (in Vermont, the number was 1,791 for and 3 opposed). That, however, was not good enough for the D.F.U., which now demanded a flat price for all classes of milk of \$3.00 per cwt., rather than the \$2.00 or \$2.15 blended price (average of all classes) that the new amendments would bring. An impossible demand, said Cladakis, for it would have meant raising the price of fluid milk to \$4.81.³² By now, however, the Dairy League was also arguing for higher prices, while in Montpelier, Commissioner Jones, a firm supporter of the marketing orders, warned that the country was facing a competition between agricultural and industrial labor, just as it had in 1917–1918. This time, however, price controls, virtually unknown twenty years earlier, had become widespread.³³

Did the overwhelming approval of the new amendments mean, asked the *Burlington Free Press*, that the D.F.U.'s demand for a \$3 flat price reflected the views of only a small minority of the shed's dairymen? Or did it mean, as some were now charging (including Wade Walker of Bridport, who had now replaced Child as chairman of the Addison County chapter), that many farmers had not voted at all because the ballots were sent out too late?³⁴ Whatever the case, by June's end, the threat of a new strike was very much in the air. "We do not feel," said Holland Foster on June 20, announcing a forthcoming D.F.U. vote on a "milk holiday" (a term the Union deemed preferable to "strike"), that the new amendments would "make a sufficient difference to compensate for extreme drought losses, higher labor costs, and other extraordinary

influences.” A week later, the Union set a deadline of June 30 for an acceptance of their \$3.00 flat price proposal. “Otherwise,” warned Foster, “the war would be on.” On the 27th the D.F.U. wired President Roosevelt, promising that while farmers would do their best to meet the needs of national defense, dairy price structures, together with the drought and loss of farm labor, made it impossible for them and threatened the very survival of thousands of farm families.³⁵

Mass meetings, as the D.F.U. called them, then took place in the twenty-eight counties of the shed that had chapters. On July 1, some thousand or more dairymen crammed themselves into the New Haven Town Hall, about half of them said to be D.F.U. members. There, in a meeting chaired by Walker, they voted overwhelmingly to join the “milk holiday.” Charles Child’s house was to serve as headquarters, with pickets reporting there for assignment, and Walker appealed to his members to keep the picketing peaceful and avoid any violence or forcible milk dumping. There was apparently no similar meeting in Rutland County, though there may have been local ones. Although the *Burlington Free Press* reported that one of the aims of the New Haven meeting was the picketing of every plant delivering either to New York or Boston, there was no evidence that the Boston shed was at all affected.³⁶

A *Free Press* editorial the next day took a very tolerant view of the “holiday,” sympathetic to the farmers’ problems, if not to their call for a \$3 flat price (it also managed a very Republican swipe at the power of organized labor). Over the next few days, newspapers reported that the stoppage was having an immediate effect, as roughly 1,200 Addison County farmers, D.F.U. members as well as others, withheld their milk, as did some in neighboring counties, virtually drying up some of the major plants in Middlebury, New Haven, Vergennes, and elsewhere. Though Vermont’s Dairy League voted not to join the strike, Donald Downs of Cornwall, the secretary-treasurer of the Addison County D.F.U., claimed that 97 percent of the county milk supply was being held back. Whether or not that figure was accurate, the larger strike undoubtedly had an impact, and by July 4 the New York City health commissioner admitted that roughly 3 million quarts of the city’s normal daily inflow of 7 million were not being delivered.³⁷

“We are trying to conduct the strike like gentlemen,” Downs told the press. “We don’t want any trouble. We simply have refused to let the purchaser set the price of milk for us. We, as producers, have our own idea of what the price should be in order for us to live. Otherwise we might just as well quit our farms and go to work in the factories somewhere.” By then, though, there were already reports of violence and preparations to counter it: the dumping (helped by a deputy sheriff,

according to one report) of 15,000 gallons of milk from two intercepted trucks in the town of Addison, threats to use tear gas against pickets outside the Sheffield plant at Charlotte, just over the border from Addison in Chittenden County, and deputy sheriffs patrolling the roads of Rutland County near the New York state line.³⁸

Then, on the morning of July 3, came tragedy. Ray Russell, a deputy sheriff from Monkton, was riding through the little town of Waltham on a milk truck trying to make a delivery to the Charlotte plant. Precisely what happened is unclear. Somehow he fell from the truck, perhaps by accident, perhaps because of a tussle with pickets trying to board to dump the cargo. Different witnesses had different stories, but Russell fell under the truck's wheels and was killed. By the end of the day four farmers had been arrested and were in the Middlebury jail, held on charges of manslaughter.³⁹

The news, of course, came as a terrible shock. During the D.F.U.'s 1939 strike, a man had also died, but that was in far-off Pennsylvania, and Vermont had no part in it. Through the 1930s, the state had seen violence in a wave of industrial strikes: in the Barre granite sheds, in the textile mills, and above all during the great Vermont Marble Company strike in Proctor. But there had been no loss of life. (Ironically enough Russell, a member of Monkton's small Quaker community, had also played a role in the attempt to break the Proctor strike.) The milk holiday would continue, claimed Wade Walker, reminding his shaken listeners that the Union had repeatedly warned against violence, and that tragic as it was, Russell's death "had no logical bearing on whether or not farmers are to get a living wage for their toil." From New York, however, Cladakis had a different message: Though the city's milk supply had not been substantially hurt, "terrorism is now the weapon being used to enforce the strike demand. By terror and terror alone it is now the design of strikers to frighten non-strikers into keeping their milk at home."⁴⁰ Hyperbolic though his words may have been, what happened in Waltham that morning seems to have taken the heart out of the milk holiday, at least in Vermont, if not among the strikers of New York and Pennsylvania.

For a few days, though, the movement threatened to grow worse. Despite the refusal of the Addison County Dairy League to participate, meetings elsewhere in the shed suggested the League members might be willing to join, and indeed about 20 percent of its producers were said to be withholding their milk already. Were the entire League to follow suit, predicted the *New York Times*, some 86 percent of the shed's farmers would hold back their production, thus presenting the city with a situation far worse than that of 1939. As it was, while the D.F.U.'s

claim to have halved the city's daily supply might at first have been a bit premature, at the strike's height the figure was probably roughly accurate, and came close to matching the results achieved two years earlier.⁴¹

Yet by now the D.F.U. itself was looking for a face-saving way out. It came from Van Hornesville, New York, where Owen D. Young, the former chairman of General Electric (and author of the Young Plan for German war reparations) owned several dairy farms. A "returned farmer," rather than a "retired industrialist," he liked to call himself, and even before the strike he had thrown in his lot with the dairymen, arguing the case for substantially higher payments, and suggesting to Washington a drastic simplification of the milk classification system for the benefit of both farmers and consumers.⁴² Now, as the strike began, Young withheld his own milk, calling for a mediation board to determine a fair price for producers, and arguing that the milk order lacked the flexibility needed to meet emergencies such as the drought and the labor shortage. He then invited representatives from six dairy organizations to meet at his farm on July 5, there to work out a plan of action. Four of them, including the D.F.U., came; two others did not. One was the Eastern Milk Producers Association (whose milk went to Sheffield Farms) and the other was Archie Wright's new Farmers' Union. A day later, the Young group traveled to Albany on Governor Herbert Lehman's invitation, and there hammered out a petition for new amendments to the milk order. Though at first Holland Foster dismissed the move, saying that the D.F.U. would continue the stoppage, in fact his Union gave way, voting not for an end to the strike, but for a "recess" (in practice the same thing) while the talks continued. The news spread rapidly in Addison and Rutland counties, and at a meeting of nearly a thousand farmers in the Middlebury High School, gathered to hear Walker's report, the 152 D.F.U. members present voted their approval of the recess.⁴³

Despite subsequent interventions by Young's group, clashes over pricing continued for the next months. While Cladakis had found the D.F.U.'s demand for a flat \$3 price unrealistic, Wade Walker, quoting Young, claimed that it could be met if dealers were to take less. Though by September 1941 the blended price had risen to \$2.54, most of that apparent gain was wiped out by the rising cost of feed (up almost a third over the year), and a study by the deans of three agricultural colleges, one of which was the University of Vermont, predicted that the production costs would be well over \$3 per cwt. for the next few months. In August, Walker and Donald Downs traveled to Albany for hearings on new amendments to the milk order, and though the changes passed

overwhelmingly, they did little to satisfy the producers.⁴⁴ “I have lost what little faith I had in the . . . Federal-state milk marketing Order,” declared Holland Foster at another D.F.U. convention in early September, and though he opposed another strike just then, he warned his audience to prepare for a coming “finish fight for a living price of milk.” The convention also passed a resolution seeking the removal of the “unfair” and “incompetent” Cladakis, as well as—interesting in view of what would come—a proposal to consider a D.F.U. affiliation with the A.F.L.⁴⁵

Nor was it the D.F.U. alone that held such sentiments. In late September, a group of six leading Addison County members of the Dairy League, all of them also bank directors, sought the help of Senators Warren Austin and George Aiken in initiating an investigation of the New York milk order. While it was supposed to protect the interests of farmers, they argued, it had now become an instrument of price control, unfairly holding back their receipts while industry and labor saw no such restrictions. Aiken thereupon wrote both the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Justice seeking explanations, while warning his correspondents that if farmers did not unite, they stood “to become a class of peasantry, dependent on crumbs in the form of subsidies which are thrown to them by the Government.” Though the D.F.U. itself seems not to have been directly involved, it was at the same time demanding its own investigation of New York pricing. In both cases the impetus must have come at least in part from the meetings chaired by Owen Young, in which the Union and the Dairy League both took part.⁴⁶

By November, the blended price had risen to \$2.75. America’s entry into the war after December 7, 1941 brought patriotic pledges from dairymen to redouble their efforts in the battle for production, but despite a report by the Extension Department that in 1941 farmers had enjoyed their best year since the Depression, the underlying imbalance between milk production costs and milk pricing continued. In the meantime, nothing came of the D.F.U.’s exploration of an affiliation with the A.F.L., thanks to that body’s view that dairy farmers, as employers of labor themselves, were not candidates for unionization.⁴⁷

The D.F.U. had one more great surprise up its sleeve, however. Suddenly, in mid-January 1942, at a time when newspapers carried almost daily reports of one disastrous defeat after another suffered by America and its allies at the hands of Japan, there erupted into the domestic arena a new enemy far more frightening to many than William Green’s relatively well-behaved A.F.L. John L. Lewis, who had stepped down as head of the C.I.O. after backing Wendell Wilkie’s presidential bid in 1940, now announced that his powerful United Mine Workers (then

still a unit of the C.I.O.) was about to launch a new drive to organize the nation's three million dairy farmers. Though editorial writers had some fun speculating on the connection between cows and coal, and the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* printed a cartoon of Lewis in Napoleonic dress and riding a cow, others were seriously worried. Within the U.M.W. there existed a body known as District 50, which sought to organize workers in coal's by-products, such as chemicals, dyes, plastics, and so forth. As Ora Gasaway, the District's president pointed out, casein (a milk derivative) was used in the manufacture of plastic buttons, thus leading to the logical conclusion that milk producers should also be the object of the U.M.W.'s benefactions.⁴⁸

Lewis, of course, had his admirers and disciples. To many, however, even within the labor movement, he and his union were objects of fear, disgust, even hatred. His labor career, effective as it might be, had been stormy. His antipathy toward Roosevelt and his support of Wilkie in 1940 had cost him dearly, as many in his own movement refused to abandon their New Deal leanings to vote Republican. Though few would have accused him of communist sympathies, after September 1939, his ties to the America Firsters made him a natural ally of Communists in the labor movement, until the Party's sudden about-face on June 22, 1941 from rabid isolationism to rapid interventionism. Yet no one denied either the strength or the effectiveness of his U.M.W., and over the months that now followed, many feared that his invasion of agriculture was not only an attempt to turn the powerful miners' union into a third huge labor movement against his rivals in the A.F.L. and C.I.O., but also marked nothing less than the opening of a drive to control the nation's very food supply itself.

Lewis's first foray into agriculture had come when 5,000 Michigan dairy farmers, moved by his successes in the organization of Detroit's automobile industry, gave him their allegiance. His next target was the New York milkshed, where presumably he was attracted by the radical history of the D.F.U., which at that point still claimed 22,000 members. By early February 1942, the Union's General Organizing Committee, moved by what they called "the brilliant and fruitful labor statesmanship of Mr. Lewis," voted at their Utica headquarters to affiliate with District 50, and thus to become a new group, now to be known as the United Dairy Farmers, C.I.O. "An admission of bankruptcy of intellect and finance," the embittered Archie Wright called the move, but later that month Ralph Marlatt, who had emerged as the national head of the new U.D.F., announced that the gains in New York and Michigan were but the beginning of a drive that would eventually embrace the dairy producers of the entire nation.⁴⁹

The Utica vote did not bind the D.F.U.'s county chapters, however, and news of the proposed affiliation with Lewis came as a surprise to Vermont dairymen. He knew only what the papers told him, said Wade Walker, adding that while for the moment he opposed the move, he would keep an open mind till he had been to Utica to learn more.⁵⁰ There he went with Donald Downs, and as soon as he was back home, he sounded very different indeed. "Walker Announces Plans to Affiliate Vermont Dairymen with United Mine Workers," ran a headline in the *Rutland Herald*, reporting his announcement on March 18, 1942, of a forthcoming campaign to organize Addison County's dairymen into the new U.D.F. Of course, he added, some details still had to be worked out, and he would presently return to Utica for further discussions with Kathryn Lewis, the fiercely loyal daughter of the U.M.W. chief and secretary-treasurer of District 50, and Ray Thomason, the former chairman of District 50 in Michigan, who would direct the U.D.F.'s organizing. In the meantime, he reassured his audiences that the U.M.W. was not interested in organizing farm labor, thus countering fears, real or imagined, that the hired man would suddenly demand a forty-hour week, time and a half for overtime, and double pay on Sundays and holidays. To his audience, Walker listed the advantages of affiliation, adding that the Dairy Farmers' Union would remain in complete control of its own affairs, and stating his conviction that not only were no Communists involved, but that Lewis was actively rooting them out of the U.M.W., and indeed that most attacks on Lewis were now coming from Communists and their sympathizers.⁵¹

"Someone in Utica seems to have done a good sales job on Wade Walker," the *Free Press* noted wryly, surprised that the former skeptic had suddenly become a true believer, and adding that his characterization of Lewis as a "man who generally gets what he goes after" could be said just as well of Adolf Hitler. "If," remarked the *Rutland Herald*, "the rest of the Vermont members of the union are converted as quickly and easily, there will be a strong affiliate of Lewis' U.M.W. in this state." From Vergennes, F. M. Dana, an active opponent of the 1941 strike, wrote an open letter to Walker, denying that communism was in fact being driven from the U.M.W., and taking issue with his statement that most of the attacks on Lewis now came from Communists and their sympathizers. Attacks like those from the National Grange? he asked. Or from the American Farm Bureau Federation, or the National Council of Farmers' Cooperatives, all of which had condemned Lewis's move? He was equally upset by Walker's plan to meet with Kathryn Lewis, reminding him "that there are hundreds of farmers who do not intend to be caught courting any petticoat government in this part of

the milkshed. With all due respect to Miss Lewis in her proper realm, we are emphatically opposed to any such scheme, and have yet a little confidence that there is yet a little Yankee blood left in some of the Vermont farmers to shun that unholy alliance” (a phrase that left some doubt whether it was Mr. Lewis’s miners or Miss Lewis’s sex that represented the chief threat to agricultural integrity). In private, S. Seeley Reynolds of Middlebury, a director of the Eastern States Farmers’ Exchange, wrote to Governor William Wills, asking that something be done to counter Walker’s views (the governor, on reflection, decided not to intervene).⁵²

Two months later, however, when the Addison County D.F.U. gathered to elect its officers, Walker sounded a very different note indeed, claiming that the press had badly misrepresented his supposed enthusiasm for affiliation. On May 7, 1942, in the presence of District 50’s Ray Thomason and another U.D.F. organizer, he first announced that he would not stand for reelection. He then roundly denounced any kind of alliance between dairymen and organized labor. The latter, he maintained, wanted milk prices to stay low; their tactics all too often demanded sacrifice from their workers; and the U.M.W.’s proposed “exorbitant” dues structure would build up “a tremendous treasury at the farmers’ expense.”

Donald Downs, on the other hand, supported the affiliation, arguing that it would substantially help both farmers and consumers, cutting back on the profits made by dealers at the expense of both. How Thomason, who addressed the gathering at some length, blaming the “milk trust” for dairy’s hardships, responded to this development was not recorded. Nor was his reaction to the vote of the D.F.U. members present, who, faced with this split in their own leadership, and despite Walker’s withdrawal of his own candidacy, proceeded to reelect both him and Downs to office.⁵³ Nor, save for reporting Walker’s claims of misrepresentation, did the press try to explain the startling difference between his apparent views in March and those later in May. Yet was it really possible that three papers—in Burlington, Rutland, and Middlebury—had all misunderstood him so badly at first? Did he simply, in those two months, come to find the anti-Lewis arguments more persuasive than earlier? Had others talked him round? Or had Walker perhaps only appeared to favor Lewis at first, in order to drive home to the public the dairyman’s plight?

Whatever the reasons, Wade Walker was a man whose words were highly respected locally, and whose constituents had sent him to represent them in the General Assembly. In any case, the metamorphosis of the Union in February from old D.F.U. to new U.D.F. District 50,

together with Walker's opposition to affiliation, appear to have left the Addison County chapter something of an orphan, and by and large its activities thereafter disappeared almost entirely from the pages of the state's newspapers (perhaps it was telling that only fifty members had shown up at the May meeting). On the other hand, the larger threat from Lewis in 1942 called forth a broad opposition not only from the press but also from the older and more established agricultural associations. The state Grange's executive committee, for example, issued a strong condemnation of any merger of farm interests with organized labor, encouraging farmers to uphold "their traditional independence and unity of purpose" by working through organizations, such as cooperatives, that they owned and controlled themselves. Meanwhile from Montpelier, Commissioner E. H. Jones, mixing Biblical and Virgilian allusions, urged dairymen not "to sell their birthright for a mess of pottage," and to "beware of Greeks bearing gifts." The *Rutland Herald* found the commissioner's remarks somewhat intemperate, but many others applauded him.⁵⁴

More significant at the time seemed to be the formation, in the spring of 1942, of two new organizations dedicated to blocking the U.M.W.'s dairy drive in the northeast. Late March saw the emergence of a group called the Free Farmers, Inc., with a membership drawn primarily from New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey, though with a scattering of Vermont representatives as well, including S. Seeley Reynolds of Middlebury.⁵⁵ Meanwhile, a conference of dairy interests met on March 19 in Boston (Jones was among those attending), and out of this emerged in late April a similar group called the Agricultural Council of New England. Like the Free Farmers, it came to embrace not only the state Granges and Farm Bureaus but other farm groups as well. Like the Free Farmers, it made no secret of the fact that its chief purpose was the defeat of Lewis's drive, but at the same time it promised to work more broadly for the interests of New England agriculture as a whole, doing for the region's farmers what the New England Council had done for business and industry (a hope welcomed by Commissioner Jones).⁵⁶

Not surprisingly, District 50 immediately attacked both groups as being little more than tools of the "milk trust."⁵⁷ Yet as spring lengthened into summer and beyond, it became increasingly clear that the U.M.W.'s organizational attempts were running into their own difficulties. In early July, Charles Fell, a District 50 leader, praising the work already done in Vermont, announced the imminent opening of the larger New England drive, led by Cecil Crawford of Barre, at a big meeting to be held in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Yet only fifteen local dairy farmers showed up at that city's Hotel Wendell on July 15, and their mood was

far from enthusiastic.⁵⁸ At the end of September 1942, Joseph Mayo, a regional director of the District, promised the launch of the New England drive in October, and he too referred to what had already been accomplished in Vermont. Indeed, wrote the *Christian Science Monitor* at the time, Vermont—and Addison County in particular—promised to be “the major battleground of New England in the scheduled struggle between Mr. Lewis’ union and the farm organizations for control of the dairy farmers.” Yet once again, only silence followed Mayo’s announcement. The spring of 1943 brought still more promises, as well as boasts from District 50 about the splendid progress being made in New England. But it also brought news of the withdrawal of Ora Gasaway and Ralph Marlatt from the campaign, as well as the customary failure to follow up with any real organizational work. Nor, it appears, after the conversion of the old D.F.U. the past spring, did the efforts of the new U.D.F. in New York have much better luck, though not surprisingly, the claims made by the union and its opponents were wildly at variance.⁵⁹

If Vermont in general, and Addison County in particular, were supposed to be central to Lewis’s New England organization, that organization was well hidden. Despite all the promises and all the claimed progress in organizing dairymen, before the end of 1944 even the Free Farmers realized that Lewis had been defeated (or had simply withdrawn) and not surprisingly gave themselves credit for his vanquishing. As the *Christian Science Monitor* concluded late that year, for all the claims of District 50’s move into New England agriculture, in the end there had only been two minor forays, presumably a reference to Ray Thomason’s trip to Middlebury, when Wade Walker made known his opposition to affiliation, and the meeting shortly thereafter of fifteen skeptical dairymen in Pittsfield. Nor was it only District 50 that vanished. In the end, for all its promises to serve as a coordinating body to deal with the varied problems of New England agriculture, once the threat from the U.M.W. had disappeared, so too the new Agricultural Council also faded away. With Lewis gone, it simply no longer seemed to have a job to do.⁶⁰

Was Lewis—at least in the dairy field—simply another Hotspur then, calling spirits from the vasty deep, but unable to guarantee their coming? Perhaps so, but for a while he struck fear into a good many hearts. “A perfect pattern for American dictatorship,” Thomas Dewey, running for the governorship of New York in April 1942, called his supposed threat to control the nation’s food supply, and indeed a year later an opinion poll showed Lewis to be the most hated man in America.⁶¹ Meanwhile his District 50 somehow managed to spend over

\$3,000,000 in this petty and unsuccessful effort. A number of reasons can be suggested for their failure, quite apart from the prejudices that many, perhaps most, farmers had against organized labor, "coddled," as they thought, by the same Roosevelt administration that simultaneously held them back.⁶² For reasons having little to do with agriculture, District 50 became something of a pawn in labor politics, and many saw Lewis using it simply to enhance his personal position against both the C.I.O. and the A.F.L., each of which understandably now regarded him with deep suspicion. Finally, two of Lewis's biographers fault him for leaving the dairy drive in the charge of old U.M.W. hacks of little imagination or organizing skill. These were virtues which his daughter, Kathryn Lewis, had in abundance. But she was merely District 50's secretary-treasurer.⁶³

So the Dairy Farmers' Union gradually faded from sight in Vermont. It had come to the state late, only after several years of existence in New York, and then had seen its parent suddenly swallowed up by the U.M.W. in early 1942. The D.F.U. was always a New York group, and in Vermont affected only those western counties that formed part of the New York milkshed. Despite occasional claims to the contrary by Archie Wright and others, it did virtually nothing to enter the Boston shed, into which the majority of Vermont dairymen sold. Perhaps, too, in retrospect it owed its brief popularity in Vermont to causes somewhat different from those evident in New York. There, the Union had been a child of the bleakest years of the Great Depression. In Vermont, on the other hand, the growth of the D.F.U. after mid-1939 may well have owed more to the state's gradual economic recovery than to the Depression's actual hardships, severe as they had been.

In his biennial report of mid-1940, Commissioner Jones was able for the first time to point to a slowly improving situation and a rising standard of living, all giving hope for the future. Among other things, he noted that while farm equipment still remained too expensive, farm labor was available at a reasonable cost, and he praised the coming of federal intervention stabilizing milk pricing through the New York and Boston milk orders. There are two points worth noting about the New York milk order, however. First, price stability did not always improve the farmers' situation. Though the Depression might be easing, Addison County, which provided almost half the Vermont milk sold to New York, continued to receive prices for its milk that were, as in the past, well below the state average, and more often than not at or near the bottom of annual county listings.⁶⁴

Second, it was not until mid-1939 that the New York milk order was firmly established, and by then perhaps it was simply too late.

Even as Jones issued his moderately optimistic 1940 report, things were beginning to change, and by no means for the better. Within months of the milk order's inception in 1939, the outbreak of war (as Jones himself would point out in his next report of 1942) brought the growth of a national defense economy that once again seemed to threaten whatever gains dairymen at last might be making. Their promising pool of workers vanished, as young men were called up in the draft, and the expanding defense industries encouraged an emigration from farm to factory, severely limiting the availability of farm labor and driving up its price. Meanwhile, an industry shifting toward war production raised the price and reduced the availability of farm equipment. Thus, quite apart from the bad droughts of 1939 and 1941, northern farmers saw their modest recovery from the Depression once again under threat. Though urged by the government to increase production for national defense, many saw the federal-state order obliging them to sell their milk at prices set below their rising production costs. The sense that the Roosevelt administration "coddled" organized labor, imposing no restraints on the industrial or transport unions while holding back farm prices, was already common well before the Gallup poll of 1943 cited above. Under such conditions, unionization—even for some, affiliation with a group like the U.M.W.—may well have looked like a way to preserve the modest gains that seemed endangered almost as soon as the Depression began to ease.

In the end, though, the history of the Dairy Farmers Union in the state is little more than a footnote to the larger (and still to be written) history of agriculture in twentieth-century Vermont. Indeed, for all the changes that have taken place since then, it is surprising (and depressing) to observe the similarities between the woes of the state's dairy farmers today and those of sixty years ago.⁶⁵ Dairy farmers saw themselves, and others saw them, as businessmen. But then why were they not allowed to be normal businessmen? Perhaps, suggested Commissioner Jones after the 1941 strike, Washington's efforts to hold back New York milk prices were part of a plan to curb the inflation seen during the first world war—"but since government has been powerless in preventing the inflation of production costs it leaves the dairymen in a position as unjustifiable as it is untenable." Or, as a "Sudbury Producer" asked in a letter to the press, "does Mr. Ford produce airplanes for Uncle Sam without any profit or below the cost of production? Does the laborer in munitions factories work for his board and room? Does the textile factory make clothes for Uncle Sam's armies below cost?"⁶⁶ These were questions that at the time appeared to have no good answers.

NOTES

¹ *Agriculture of Vermont: Seventeenth Biennial Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture of the State of Vermont, 1933–1934*, 6; *Twenty-first Biennial Report, 1941–1942*, 4; Edwin C. Rozwenc, *Agricultural Policies in Vermont, 1860–1945* (Montpelier: Vermont Historical Society, 1981).

² E. H. Jones, quoted in the *Christian Science Monitor* (hereafter CSM), 13 April 1942, 1.

³ *Middlebury Register* (hereafter MR), 27 June 1941, 1. Production figures varied from month to month, of course, and May, as part of the spring “milk flush,” saw higher figures than those in fall or winter. *Agriculture of Vermont: Eighteenth Biennial Report, 1935–1936*, lists the percentages of Vermont milk and cream in the New York and Boston markets, from 1927–1935 (see pages 59–62).

⁴ A brief history of National Dairy can be found in the Lehman Brothers collection at the Baker Library of the Harvard Business School, Cambridge, Mass. http://www.library.hbs.edu/hc/lehman/chrono.html?company=national_dairy_products_corporation; accessed 20 Aug. 2009.

⁵ Lowell Dyson, *Red Harvest: The Communist Party and American Farmers* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 169–170; Thomas Kriger, “The 1939 Dairy Farmers’ Milk Strike in Heuvelton and Canton, New York: The Story in Words and Pictures” (hereafter “Milk Strike 1939”), *Journal of Multimedia History*, 1 (Fall 1998), Part I, 30, at <http://www.albany.edu/jmmh/vol1no1/dairy1.html>.

⁶ *Agriculture of Vermont: Twentieth Biennial Report, 1939–1940*, 46, 62.

⁷ For the Boston market, see Rozwenc, *Agricultural Policies in Vermont*, 170–177; *Agriculture of Vermont: Seventeenth Biennial Report, 1933–1934*, 6; *1935–1936*, 6; Michael Sherman, Gene Sessions, and P. Jeffrey Potash, *Freedom and Unity: A History of Vermont* (Barre: Vermont Historical Society, 2004), 461–463. For New York’s problems, see Dyson, *Red Harvest*, 171.

⁸ *New York Times* (hereafter NYT), 1 February 1941, 19. See also N. J. Cladakis and Anson J. Pollard, “Some Economic Problems Encountered in Milk Control Administration,” *Journal of Farm Economics*, 24 (February 1942): 326–332.

⁹ General histories of the D.F.U. can be found in Thomas Kriger, “Syndicalism and Spilt Milk: The Origins of Dairy Farmer Activism in New York State, 1936–1941,” *Labor History* 38 (April 1997): 266–286; Kriger, “Milk Strike 1939,” Part I, 4; Lowell Dyson, “The Milk Strike of 1939 and the Destruction of the Dairy Farmers’ Union,” *New York History*, 51 (October 1970): 523–543; Dyson, *Red Harvest*, 168–185.

¹⁰ Kriger, “Milk Strike 1939,” part II, says that some D.F.U. farmers from western Vermont participated in the strike vote of 12 August 1939, but if so, the press was silent on any Union activity in the state. See *Burlington Free Press* (hereafter BFP), 14 August 1939, 1; 22 August, 6; *Rutland Herald* (hereafter RH), 17 August 1939, 2; 18 August, 1, 3; 21 August, 4; 22 August, 1; CSM, 31 October 1939, 1.

¹¹ RH, 21 August 1939, 1–2; MR, 25 August 1939, 1; BFP, 16 August 1939, 14.

¹² U.S. Bureau of the Census. *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940: Agriculture*, Volume I: Vermont, Table 3, 73, and County Table IV, 95–56; *Agriculture of Vermont: Twentieth Biennial Report, 1939–1940*, 47–62. Though comparable sales figures are scattered, some idea of size comes from a report that in December 1941, of the 19,723,855 lbs. of milk sent from Vermont to the New York market, 44.5 percent came from Addison County, and almost 30 percent from Rutland County. (MR, 30 January 1942, 1).

¹³ MR, 27 October 1939, 1; 1 November, 1; 17 November, 1.

¹⁴ CSM, 31 October 1939, 1; MR, 27 October 1939, 1.

¹⁵ MR, 8 December 1939, 1; 22 December, 1.

¹⁶ Ibid., 22 December 1939, 1; 5 January 1940, 1; 13 January, 1; 2 February, 1.

¹⁷ Ibid., 26 April 1940, 1; 21 June, 1.

¹⁸ Ibid., 22 March 1940, C-1; see also 5 January 1940, 3.

¹⁹ Dyson, *Red Harvest*, 184.

²⁰ MR, 16 August 1940; 27 September, 1–4; CSM, 24 September 1940, 14; 1 October, 10; 8 October, 10.

²¹ Kriger, *Syndicalism*, 282–283; Dyson, *Red Harvest*, 176–180.

²² MR, 18 October 1940, 2; NYT, 4 October 1940, 24; 15 October, 25.

²³ Ibid., 6 December 1940, 1.

²⁴ MR, 13 December 1940, 1.

²⁵ BFP, 28 December 1940, 1; NYT, 28 December 1940, 11; 2 January 1941, 19; MR, 10 January 1941, 1.

²⁶ NYT, 12 May 1941, 10; Dyson, *Red Harvest*, 182; Dyson, “The Milk Strike of 1939,” 542–543; MR, 10 January 1941, 3.

²⁷ NYT, 12 December 1940, 13; 17 December, 16; Cladakis and Pollard, “Economic Problems,” 328.

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²⁸ *NYT*, 27 December 1940, 11; 19 February 1941, 23; 21 February, 21; 27 February, 42; *MR*, 10 January 1941, 1; 17 January, 1, 10; 14 February, 1.

²⁹ *BFP*, 25 June 1941, 1; *MR*, 13 June 1941, 1; telegram, James Candon and others to E. W. Gaumnitz of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 26 June 1941, George D. Aiken Papers, University of Vermont, Bailey/Howe Library, Crate 7, Box 1, folder 7-1-3.

³⁰ *MR*, 2 May 1941, 1; Wade Walker to Aiken, 1 May 1941, Aiken Papers, Carton 7, Box 1, folder 7-1-3 (Walker, who would presently become chairman of the Addison County D.F.U., did not speak of the Union's role in arranging the meeting); *Agriculture of Vermont: Twenty-First Biennial Report, 1941-1942*, 3-4.

³¹ Helen S. K. Willcox in the *NYT*, 30 May 1941, 14.

³² *RH*, 25 June 1941, 2; *BFP*, 2 July 1941, 6; 5 July, 1; 10 July, 4.

³³ *BFP*, 27 June, 18; 2 July, 12; 3 July, 6.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 5 July 1941, 2.

³⁵ *NYT*, 21 June, 1941, 9; *BFP*, 27 June 1941, 1; 28 June, 1.

³⁶ *BFP*, 1 July 1941, 12; 2 July, 6; *MR*, 4 July 1941, 1. Was the number of 1,000 farmers correct? There are no accurate figures for the number of Addison County farms producing milk for sale beyond Vermont, though roughly 1,550 farms reported milking cattle. U.S. Bureau of the Census. *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940: Agriculture*, Volume I: Vermont, County Table IV, 95.

³⁷ *BFP*, 2 July 1941, 6, 28; 3 July, 14; *NYT*, 4 July 1941, 1.

³⁸ *BFP*, 3 July 1941, 14; 4 July, 2; *RH*, 2 July 1941, 1; 3 July, 1, 3; Erwin S. Clark to George D. Aiken, 3 July 1941 (Aiken Papers, Crate 7, Box 1, folder 7-1-3).

³⁹ *BFP*, 4 July 1941, 1; *MR*, 4 July 1941, 1; *RH*, 4 July 1941, 1.

⁴⁰ *BFP*, 4 July 1941, 1, 10; *MR*, 11 July 1941, 1, 8.

⁴¹ *BFP*, 4 July 1941, 2; *NYT*, 4 July 1941, 1; 5 July, 2; 7 July, 1. The exodus of many from the city over the Independence Day holiday reduced the normal demand for milk for a few days.

⁴² *NYT*, 22 May 1941, 23; 23 May, 42.

⁴³ *CSM*, 7 July 1941, 3; *NYT*, 7 July 1941, 1; 8 July, 21; *MR*, 11 July 1941, 1.

⁴⁴ *MR*, 11 August 1941, 1, 8; 22 August, 1; 19 September, 1; 3 October, 1.

⁴⁵ *CSM*, 4 Sept 1941, 9; *NYT*, 4 September 1941, 24.

⁴⁶ The correspondence and newspaper clippings can be found in the Aiken Papers, Crate 38, Box 1, folder 38-1-1; Crate 7 Box 1, folders 7-1-3 and 7-1-4; see also *MR*, 3 October 1941, 1; 10 October, 1; *BFP*, 31 October 1941, 14, 18; 1 November, 4; *RH*, 10 October 1941, 8; 31 October, 1-2; and exchange of correspondence between Governor Wills and John Riley, in the Vermont State Archives, Governor William Wills Papers, Film S-3197, 691-694. Aiken, with his rural background, had always been a strong supporter of Vermont farm interests, and sought a degree of cooperation between labor and agriculture; see Samuel B. Hand and Paul M. Searls, "Transition Politics: Vermont, 1940-1952," *Vermont History* 62 (Winter 1994): 5-25; Sherman, et al., *Freedom and Unity*, 460-463, 471-472; *BFP*, 1 October 1941, 12, reports on the D.F.U.

⁴⁷ *MR*, 26 December 1941, 1; 9 January 1942, 2; *CSM*, 6 May 1942, 2; 12 November, 22.

⁴⁸ *NYT*, 18 January 1942, 37.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 8 February 1942, 37; 26 February, 38; 11 March, 28; *BFP*, 10 February 1941, 4; *RH*, 8 February 1942, 8.

⁵⁰ *MR*, 13 March, 1; *BFP*, 10 March, 2.

⁵¹ *MR*, 13 March, 1942, 1; 20 March, 1; *BFP*, 10 March 1942, 2; 20 March, 20.

⁵² *BFP*, 20 March 1942, 6; *RH*, 20 March 1942, 8; 28 March, 42; Reynolds to William Wills, 20 March 1942, Wills Papers, Film S-3197, 800-801.

⁵³ *BFP*, 8 May 1942, 18; *RH*, 8 March, 1942, 3.

⁵⁴ *BFP*, 23 March 1942, 14; 25 March, 1; 26 March, 16; *RH*, 27 March 1942, 6.

⁵⁵ Dyson, *Red Harvest*, 182-183; *NYT*, 13 April 1942, 1. It's unclear whether Reynolds was part of the original group, though later he was a director (*NYT*, 16 April 1944, 36). A small collection of papers relative to the Council can be found in the Vermont State Archives, PRA 063, Records and Correspondence of the Commissioner of Agriculture, container PRA-00298, folder "The Agricultural Council of New England."

⁵⁶ *CSM*, 22 April 1942, 2; 25 July, 2; *BFP*, 23 April 1942, 4; 30 October, 18. Similar moves against Lewis's dairy drive took place in other states; see, for example, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 12 April 1942, 20; *NYT*, 19 April 1942, E10; *CSM*, 24 May 1942, 8.

⁵⁷ *NYT*, 22 April 1942, 25; *CSM*, 20 August 1942, 2.

⁵⁸ *CSM*, 9 July 1942, 2; 15 July, 2; 25 July, 2.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 30 September 1942, 5; 6 October, 3; 1 May 1943, 4; *Washington Post*, 25 February 1943, 4; *NYT*, 28 May 1943, 14.

⁶⁰ *CSM*, 1 May 1943, 4; *NYT*, 16 April 1944, 36; *CSM*, 18 December 1944, 1-2. Indeed, when a few years later a new New England agricultural commission was proposed for similar purposes, there was no mention at all of the old Council (*CSM*, 21 November 1947, 2).

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⁶¹ *NYT*, 26 April 1942, 35; Richard J. Polenberg, *War and Society: The United States, 1941–1945* (New York: J. B. Lippincott, 1972), 165.

⁶² James Wechsler, *Labor Baron: A Portrait of John L. Lewis* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1944), 190–191; for the “coddling,” see George Gallup in the *Washington Post*, 26 December 1943, B5.

⁶³ Wechsler, *Labor Baron*, 190–191; Saul Alinsky, *John L. Lewis: An Unauthorized Biography* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1949), 256–257. See also Melvyn Dubovsky and Warren Van Tine, *John L. Lewis: A Biography* (New York: Quadrangle/The New York Times Book Co., 1977), 449–450.

⁶⁴ See the county tables in the various biennial reports of *Agriculture of Vermont*. It’s tempting to conclude that milk sent to New York brought lower prices than that sent to Boston, and perhaps that’s generally true; but it’s worth noting that Franklin County, which usually ranked with Addison as the state’s leading producer of milk marketed beyond its borders, also received lower than average prices, and most of its milk went to Boston. Rutland County’s milk prices were also below the state average, though usually not as much as those in Addison.

⁶⁵ See the articles headed “Dairy in Crisis” run by the *Addison Independent*, successor to the *Middlebury Register*, in March 2009.

⁶⁶ Vermont Department of Agriculture, *Agriview*, July 1941, 4; Wills papers, Film S-3197, 751.