

Affiliated Foods files antitrust suit alleging dairy industry conspiracy

AMARILLO (AP) — Affiliated Foods Inc. filed an antitrust lawsuit against Borden Inc., Associated Milk Producers Inc. and Furr's Inc., alleging the firms conspired to keep milk industry competition out of Eastern New Mexico.

In the suit, Amarillo attorney Cleo Clayton, representing Affiliated, contends that a dairy-industry oligopoly exists in an area encompassing portions of New Mexico, Texas and Colorado, which are served by two major producers, Borden and Dean Foods Co., and a few smaller independent plants.

The suit, which was filed on Thursday, seeks \$7.5 million in damages, an amount that may be amended as the plaintiff ascertains the exact amount of damage done. Damages are tripled in antitrust litigation.

Affiliated alleges that Borden declined to sell its assets of the milk plant in Clovis, N.M., in favor of selling to AMPI, a company that markets products that do not directly compete with Borden, the *Amarillo Globe-News* reported.

The maneuver, according to the lawsuit, was

designed to protect Borden's market in the trade area.

The issue dates back to last summer, when Furr's began negotiating with Safeway Inc. to buy 60 grocery stores in the affected area, the suit says.

During that time, Affiliated contends the defendants conspired to have Furr's also purchase the equipment and the leasehold estate at the Clovis milk plant so that it could be put in the control of Borden.

The land and building at the milk plant site are owned by the city of Clovis.

Furr's closed the plant after acquiring the lease to the facility and Borden acquired the assets, the suit alleges. Borden then prepared to dismantle the operation, an action objected to by city officials.

The suit alleges that Borden did not intend to operate the facility but bought the lease only to eliminate it as a processor of fluid milk products.

The Affiliated attorney said Clovis officials' objections prompted Borden to seek a new buyer

to lease the facility, and Borden offered to sell the plant to Affiliated for the amount of salvage value.

In December, the lawsuit contends, Affiliated agreed in writing to the price Borden placed on the sale of the assets.

Borden declined the Affiliated offer, selling its holdings instead to AMPI, the suit claims.

The agreement between Borden and AMPI, according to the suit, called for the dismantling and removal of fluid milk equipment, to be replaced with equipment that would turn the operation into a balancing plant processing butter, dry milk products and cheddar cheese.

That would enable Borden to eliminate a competitor for its fluid milk, cottage cheese and sour cream business, officials said.

Clayton said Furr's benefitted from the arrangement because it could guarantee that Borden would not have a competitor in the area that would distribute the products to Furr's competitors at a cost less than that paid by Furr's for such products.

Activist calls Easter protest 'success'

HOUSTON (AP) — A gay rights activist called a symbolic protest at a Baptist Easter Sunday service a success, while church officials said the group distorted an issue to their own ends.

Between 75-200 gay rights supporters attended services at the Second Baptist Church here to protest the exclusion of a French horn player with AIDS and tuberculosis from performing during the service, gay rights activist Ray Hill said.

Pastor Ed Young estimated as many as 6,000 people showed up to hear his Easter message, which began with a reference to the Black Death, continued into accounts of his own brushes with death and ended with the importance of the resurrection of Christ.

The Black Death swept Europe in the 14th Century, killing much of its population. In recent years, parallels have been drawn between the plague and the toll the so-far incurable AIDS epidemic may take.

Man in prison after posing as female recording artist

FORT WORTH (AP) — For 11 months last year, Hilton Williams passed himself off as rhythm-and-blues recording artist Shirley Murdock, and signed her name to about \$20,000 of worthless checks.

Now he sits in the Tarrant County Jail, but he isn't singing the blues.

The 27-year-old former Dallas bank teller is dreaming of the money he'll make when he writes the book and makes the movie about his exploits.

The real Shirley Murdock has had a hit single, "As We Lay," and has performed on network television and toured widely.

Posing as Murdock, Williams claims to have persuaded her fans, acquaintances and club owners that he was the real thing.

"Maybe I've always had the ability," he told the *Dallas Morning News*. "It's so easy for people to like me. Even some of the people who I told, 'I'm not Shirley Murdock' — they still hung around."

Tarrant County prosecutor Mike Berry called Williams "a super con," and his attorney, Steven Stavron, said, "It's just beyond belief."

Williams is waiting to be transferred to the Texas Department of Corrections to begin serving two prison sentences — 10 years from a court in Walker County for theft and four years from a court in Tarrant County for theft by check.

In the Tarrant County case, Williams was accused of writing a series of worthless checks in February 1987 under his own name to buy women's clothing, a handbag and shoes. He later wore the items when impersonating Murdock.

"I was just doing it for fun at first," Williams said in a recent interview at the county jail. "But it got so big, and I started to make some money, so I said, 'Let's jump on this.'"

He signed Murdock's name on about \$20,000 in worthless checks during his travels to Washington, Chicago, New York, Miami and Atlanta.

Williams, a soft-spoken man, 5 feet 7 and 187 pounds, said he began to impersonate Murdock after seeing her on "Soul Train."

"Everybody said I looked just like her, sang just like her," he said. "I

just thought that was the way to go."

Williams has an engaging personality and on several occasions has turned the somber courtroom into a comedy corner.

Williams said he doesn't know when he discovered his ability to deceive, but officials said that long before he began impersonating Murdock he was an accomplished hot-check artist.

Several years ago, he drove off in a new Jaguar after writing a \$20,000 bad check, officials said.

Williams was arrested at a hotel in Washington in December when a clerk caught wind of his ruse. He was returned to Texas to face the theft charges in Walker and Tarrant counties.

Williams wants to get a book published or a film made about his life.

"I want to go straight when I get out," he said. "Now that I realize I do have talent, I want to use my talent and skill to enhance my career."

"I'll be glad when everything's over and we can start making some money off of it."

MAN'S INHUMANITY TO MAN:

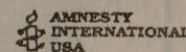
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FEATURING: **STEVE HERRICK**
SOUTHERN REGIONAL DIRECTOR
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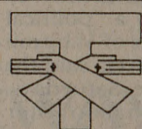
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