

Federal Order Hearing
Salt Lake Airport Hilton
April 16, 2002

Dear Sirs:

My name is Ronald Stratford. I am a dairy farmer from Weber County in Northern Utah. I have been involved in the dairy business all of my life. We milk about 300 holstein cows and farm about 600 acres of alfalfa hay and corn. I am currently serving on the Board of Directors of the Utah Farmers Union representing dairy and the Utah Dairymen Association.

Weber County dairy farmers, mirroring what is happening in the state, are becoming an endangered species. Just last year, calendar year 2001, five dairy farms in my county left the business. This represents 14% of the dairymen in my county and a similar number of the cow herd. I have personally known or known of these men all my life. They too have been associated with dairy their entire lives. Most had maintained up to date farms with modern farming practices. All had been successful for most of their lives. Liquidation of their dairy herds, and thus their way of life, was not in all of their long range plans. One of them left to retire, the other four however, left because economics dictated that they must. I have struggled personally in my operation as I watch our debt load increase almost annually.

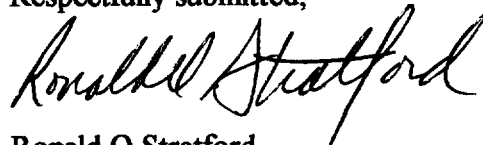
Farming has always been filled with uncertainties. It does seem highly unjust to me however, that someone totally disassociated with my operation, with the stroke of a pen, can hinder my ability to earn a profit. That is precisely what happened when federal order reform took affect in 2000. The old Great Basin Order has traditionally been a class I market. There are pros and cons to living and farming in such an order. Those who serve the order should therefore

benefit by that service. With order reform however, the profits from servicing the class I market are now shared with those who have not and never intended to serve that market. This seems totally inequitable to me, and has created further hardships for my dairy and those it supports.

In the publications that report mailbox prices from around the country, it is with no small disdain that we notice our order, as with the old order, is consistently at or near the bottom of the list. I have considered on many occasions why that is so. It was difficult enough to remain profitable in our old order, and that difficulty has now increased.

I urge the Department of Agriculture and those who administer it to carefully consider the proposals that have been offered to close these loopholes and return some equity to our market.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ronald O Stratford". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "R".

Ronald O Stratford

Stratford Dairy LTD