

Jack Anderson's Washington Merry-go-round

BY JACK ANDERSON
With Les Whitten

WASHINGTON — The Great Coffee Shortage, according to the statistical evidence, isn't nearly as dire as the coffee producers claim. On the contrary, the statistics indicate that the shortage has been contrived to justify a boost in coffee prices.

The State Dept., meanwhile, has been quietly circumventing congressional efforts to reduce the huge profits of the foreign coffee producers. The department looks upon the extra profits as a form of foreign aid, insiders explain.

Brazil is the biggest recipient of the coffee windfall but draws no foreign aid from the United States. The State Dept., therefore, would like Brazilians to collect more for their coffee in order to keep the country stable.

For the record, a spokesman denied that the State Dept. favors higher coffee prices. "The coffee producers will suffer later," he predicted, "for the high prices."

A pound of coffee, which cost about \$1.30 at the store 18 months ago, now sells for around \$3. Enraged consumers are howling. Coffee boycotts are being organized. But the coffee magnates claim, with a shrugging of shoulders, that a 1975 Brazilian frost caused the prices to skyrocket.

Yet Brazil has made a remarkable recovery. Despite the frost damage, the Brazilians managed to export a million more bags of coffee in 1976 than in 1975. World coffee exports

reached 58 million bags in 1976, the second highest figure of all time.

Congressional investigators suspect, therefore, that the coffee cartel is merely imitating the oil cartel and is putting the squeeze on the coffee consumers. Rep. Fred Richmond, D-N.Y., told us that the coffee-drinking Americans will pay the coffee cartel almost \$6 billion a year if prices remain at the present level. That's more than double the national coffee bill for 1975.

Tight market monopolies by a few large coffee retailers, according to congressional studies, are contributing to higher coffee prices. The Big Two — General Foods and Proctor and Gamble — control about half of the U.S. coffee market.

The Federal Trade Commission has charged a General Food subsidiary, Maxwell House, with illegal coffee pricing practices. According to the allegations, General Foods cut prices below cost to eliminate competition.

Footnote: Two New York congressmen, Fred Richmond and Ben Rosenthal, both Democrats, will hold hearings on coffee pricing beginning February 22. Meanwhile, Richmond plans to push for a 50 per cent decrease in coffee consumption. General Foods had no spokesman available at press time.

GOVERNMENT BURGLARIES — Startling new evidence has come to light that the government hasn't limited its burglaries to socialists and radicals. No less than the former Navy chief, Adm. Arleigh Burke, is

convinced that government gun-shoes, probably CIA burglars, broke into his private office and stole some important personal documents in 1963.

There is evidence to support his suspicion that even the nation's most prominent citizens may have been the victims of government tactics which were believed aimed at only left-wing extremists. For Burke recently discovered that the missing documents had turned up in a secret file of the Naval Investigations Service.

These documents included a raw transcript of a long interview that the admiral had granted in August 1963 to a Greek newsman, Elias Demetracopoulos. In the interview, Burke bluntly declared that the armed forces had nothing to do with the Bay of Pigs disaster. He implied that the CIA was solely to blame for the fiasco.

Only Burke, his secretary and Demetracopoulos knew of the interview before it was published in October 1963. And none of them released the raw transcript, which was edited in Burke's own handwriting.

It was a copy of this raw transcript, complete with Burke's handwritten remarks, that mysteriously turned up in the Navy file. Notations on the file indicate that the Navy was so worried about someone getting wind of the bast that all but six copies of the Burke papers were destroyed.

Burke, who received the prestigious

Medal of Freedom from President Ford last month, is upset about the apparent burglary. It occurred after he had left the Navy but was emerging as the most articulate, conservative critic of the Kennedy administration's military policies.

After conferring with his lawyers, he said: "Regrettably, the only conclusion we reached is that . . . an unauthorized and illegal entry took place in my private office" in Washington.

Our sources have told us that the Navy, originally got the sensitive Burke papers "from another agency." The former admiral told us that while it is "only a guess," he believes the "other agency" is the CIA.

There is no doubt in Burke's mind that the documents were stolen. "I can't think of any other way," he said, that they could have wound up in the government's possession. Neither he nor his secretary gave the papers to anyone, he said.

The suspicious Demetracopoulos, meanwhile, thinks that Burke's telephone was tapped, leading to the discovery of the transcript and the theft.

A few short years ago, few would have dreamed that the CIA would commit burglaries against Americans, let alone high government officials. But recent revelations of CIA skulduggery have left even former military brass wondering whether they were the victims of government break-ins.