

Paper Says It Destroyed er' on Muskie 'Canuck Lett

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A lawyer for the Manchester (N.H.) Union Leader has told the FBI that the original of the 1972 letter to the editor accusing Sen. Edmund S. Muskie (D-Me.) of calling French-Canadians "Canucks" had been destroyed.

The letter was sought from the newspaper on behalf of Special Watergate Prosecutor Archibald Cox, even as former White House aide John D. Ehrlichman mentioned it in passing during testimony on "dirty tricks" Friday before the Senate Watergate committee.

The newspaper's attorney, Ralph Sullivan of Boston, said Friday, "there is no original of the letter in existence because in accordance with newspaper practice, letters to the editor are not retained."

The letter was published Feb. 24, 1972, during Musk-

ie's primary campaign for the presidential nomination in New Hampshire. It was signed by a "Paul Morrison" of Deerfield Beach, Fla. The letter-writer said that Muskie was asked his opinion of blacks during a campaign stop in Florida. Muskie's reply allegedly was: "We don't have blacks (in Maine) but we have 'Cannocks' ". Canuck is regarded by some French Canadians as an ethnic slur. Muskie denied ever making the remark.

At the time, Union Leader editors told The Washington Post that they believed the letter to be authentic, although neither they nor other newsmen ever tracked down "Paul Morrison". On Friday, Union Leader publisher William Loeb disputed reports that the letter was not authentic, referring to a second letter from "an

alleged witness" to the incident in Florida.

Subsequently, in October, 1972, The Washington Post reported that Ken W. Clawson, deputy White House director of communications had told a Post reporter that he had fabricated the so-called canuck letter. Clawson denied making the statement or having any knowledge of the letter.

Last Friday, before the Senate Watergate committee, Ehrlichman was asked about White House "dirty tricks" against Democrats in the 1972 campaign. He said he had asked Paul O'Brien, a lawyer for the Committee for the Re-election of the President, about possible involvement of Dwight Chapin, Mr. Nixon's former appointments secretary, with Donald Segretti, a leader of the "dirty tricks" effort, and three Segretti aides.