

'Canuck Letter' Said Destroyed

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-Maine) 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 Muskie'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. Musk-

kie's reply allegedly was: "We don't have blacks (in Maine) but we have 'Cannoeks.'" 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 Canuk 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.

What dirty tricks? Ehrlichman was asked.

"Well, the only one I have a note of is 'generator of Canuck letter,' and presumably (O'Brien) meant by that that either Segretti or one of these three people were the source of that letter. What his (O'Brien's) sources for that I do not know. I asked him about Dwight Chapin's involvement in this. He said 'Well, Chapin will take a bath,' by which he meant his reputation or his good repute will be effected."

However, on Friday night, O'Brien told The Washington Post that he had no personal knowledge that either Segretti or any of his associates had written the Canuck letter.

He said he had told Ehrlichman, "I had heard it might have been generated by Segretti."

(Former White House counsel) John Dean told me that."

But O'Brien said he did not know whether Dean had reliable information or was simply passing on a rumor.

Ehrlichman also testified Friday that O'Brien had told him that a spy had been placed in the Muskie campaign who "became Senator Muskie's chauffeur and a friend of the family, and went to Muskie's house for dinner, and soon began carrying all of the senator's mail back and forth."

The man, a cab driver, photographed all the mail, Ehrlichman said. He had been recruited, he said, by a friend of Kenneth Reitz, in charge of youth activities for the Nixon campaign. The friend, Ehrlichman said, was a former FBI agent from Tennessee whom the Watergate committee had tried to hire. Ehrlichman did not name him but said "it shouldn't be too hard to find out who that was."

Muskie said the only ones who chauffeured him during his campaign were Secret Service men. One of Muskie's oldest and closest friends from Maine, Charles Lander, also drove for him on occasion, but Lander was and is among the most loyal of the Muskie entourage.