

Agriculture Dept. Suppressed Data On Russia Grain Sale, Jackson Says

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Sen. Henry M. Jackson (D-Wash.) charged yesterday that the Agriculture Department knew in advance of the massive \$1 billion grain deal with Russia but kept it secret from American farmers who were selling their produce at bargain prices.

The Agriculture Department has denied it knew of the deal before it was made public. But Jackson told a news conference, "we have affidavits that Agriculture was advised of the sales" before they took place.

Jackson is chairman of the

Senate Permanent Investigations Subcommittee which opens hearings today on the deal between private U.S. grain firms and the Soviet Union last year.

Jackson said if the Agriculture Department did not know about the secret dealings between a small group of U.S. firms and the Russians, it is "guilty of incredible negligence."

"If it is not true—if USDA in fact was aware of the negotiations—it is guilty of a deliberate attempt to conceal them from the public, particularly American farmers."

He added, "The evidence our investigation has turned up thus far leads me to conclude that the Department of Agriculture—and especially the Commodity Exchange Authority—encouraged secrecy in their dealings with the grain companies and the commodity exchanges."

Jackson also said there was substantial evidence that the Agriculture Department kept secret the disastrous Russian wheat crop "while in fact issuing misleading reports on overseas conditions and an anticipated surplus . . ."