

The Washington Merry-Go-Round

Did Soviets Manipulate U.S. Market?

By Jack Anderson

The Soviets not only out-traded American grain dealers last year but may have helped to finance the 400-million-bushel purchase by manipulating the U.S. commodity market.

This possibility has got Sen. Henry M. Jackson (D-Wash.) digging through commodity records in search of evidence, which may reveal just how badly the Communists beat the capitalists at their own game.

Jackson suspects the Soviets used European companies as fronts to trade in wheat futures. Since the Soviets alone knew how massive their U.S. grain purchases would be, they could have used this inside knowledge to speculate on the commodity market.

Jackson believes this is exactly what the Soviets did through dummy companies. They could have squeezed millions out of U.S. investors, then used the proceeds to help pay for the grain.

As Jackson has pieced together the story, here's how the Soviets skinned the American grain operators:

First, the Kremlin sent hordes of bright young men to study the American commodity market. They developed a remarkable understanding of how the market operates, then

they began making piecemeal purchases.

The American grain dealers, not knowing that the Soviets would wind up buying just about all the grain on the commercial market, bid against one another. Thus the Soviets got bargain deals before the Americans realized they could have made the same sales without price cutting.

Jackson believes the Soviets also knew their \$660 million purchase would drive up the price of wheat futures. He is convinced, therefore, that they invested heavily in wheat futures before other investors realized what was happening.

Every dollar that the Russians squeezed out of the American grain companies, of course, has been passed on to the consumers. This has led to higher prices for bread, poultry, pork and beef.

Some insiders ruefully refer to the Soviet grain deal as the Great Grain Robbery. But as usual in such affairs, it was the American consumers who were robbed.

White House Extravagance — President Nixon has slashed funds to build homes for the needy and to provide air conditioning for hospitalized veterans. But he has squandered the taxpayers' money to renovate his own

homes at San Clemente, Calif., and Key Biscayne, Fla.

Now we have obtained internal government documents that show his aides, too, have dipped freely into the public till to fix up their White House offices. The fanciest refurbishing job, ironically, was ordered for the chief fund-slasher himself, budget boss Roy Ash.

A General Services Administration memo, never meant to be read outside the government, lists the following "projects in the White House area":

- GSA installed "new paneling, cove lighting and built-in cabinetry" for Ash's offices on the second floor of the White House. The "total estimated construction cost for these offices," states the memo, "is \$21,500."

- The offices of presidential counselor Anne Armstrong were refurbished at a cost of \$3,500. The project included "the installation of new cove lighting."

- Cove lighting and other renovations for "the offices of Mr. John Ehrlichman" cost the taxpayers an estimated \$8,500. But the unhappy Ehrlichman, caught in the Watergate web, is no longer around to enjoy his new lighting.

- The White House offices of Treasury Secretary George

Shultz now contain \$4,100 worth of "built-in cabinetry and cove lighting."

- In the Executive Office Building across the parking lot from the White House, the GSA spent \$6,800 for "alterations and built-in cabinetry" for the office of Health, Education and Welfare Secretary Caspar Weinberger, another \$4,000 to fix up the office of presidential adviser Peter Flanigan and \$1,000 for improving the office of Housing and Urban Development Secretary James Lynn.

White House aides may also get an expensive new reading room. Presidential assistant Bruce Kehrli has asked the GSA, according to the memo, to conduct a "feasibility study" for the "general upgrading and conversion of the Old State Library to a new White House Library. This project will include new central air conditioning, new lighting, and new reading and librarian areas. The total estimated construction cost for this project is \$275,000. This project is currently on a 'hold' status at the instructions of Mr. Kehrli."

Meanwhile, there are a lot of sick and disabled veterans, sweltering in their hospital rooms, who would like some air conditioning, too.