

# FTC Softens Career School Report

By Jack Anderson

The Federal Trade Commission produced a dramatic booklet warning against unscrupulous practices by vocational schools, then secretly deep-sixed almost 100,000 of the books when the schools protested.

This buckling to the industry he is supposed to regulate was one of the first tests for FTC Chairman Lewis Engman, who was recently appointed by President Nixon to protect consumers from voracious business practices.

The 24-page booklet had been painstakingly put together by FTC staffers and was handsomely printed for distribution to the public. But the vocational school industry got wind of it and beefed mightily to the FTC.

When they complained, Engman called a special meeting of the commissioners, who were on vacation. Not all showed up. Those present quickly voted to put up the money for a revised booklet, which looks identical but actually leaves out some of the most stinging criticism of the profit-making schools.

Although most of the original 93,000-copy edition is now moldering in the FTC's basement, we managed to obtain one, and found it is substantially stronger than the second version, which is being re-

leased to the public with the blessing of Engman and the vocational schools.

For instance, in warning about phony degrees granted by some schools, the original pamphlet stated: "The value of a degree or diploma granted by a junior college, college or university is reliable. The worth of a degree or diploma given by a private, profit-making vocational school is sometimes more questionable."

That passage is deleted in the second booklet, and its absence is noteworthy. Many states, following a model program instituted by North Carolina, have established community colleges and vocational schools that are often superior to, and competing for the same students as commercial schools.

Another caveat expurgated by the FTC says "Vocational schools often have names which are very similar in sound or spelling to famous organizations just so you may confuse the two." The complaint is nonetheless valid: firms like IBM are continually plagued by education hucksters trading on their easily recognized initials.

The original text contains this warning: "If a course has a very low drop-out rate, it may be too easy and the school may be a 'diploma mill.' Some courses are designed to be easy so students will complete them

and schools will get all the money." This was deleted entirely from the revised brochure.

FTC Commissioner Paul Rand Dixon, who was not at the rush meeting on the booklet, said, "I've got kind of a soft spot in my heart for correspondence schools. Not everyone has a rich daddy (but) some of these places are just out and out diploma mills."

Joan Z. Bernstein, acting director of FTC's Bureau of Consumer Protection, said the commission had "planned a second edition anyway." She insisted there were no pressures to alter the text, but admitted there were objections from representatives of the vocational schools.

"We've never printed anything like this before," Mrs. Bernstein said. "We wanted to do it right." There are, however, 24 pamphlets on display in the lobby of the FTC building, and the vocational school brochure is the 13th in a series of consumer bulletins.

Our own sources in FTC told us the industry protests were the main reason that the booklet was "revised." It had been originally issued, they said, after numerous young Americans complained that they believed the promises of "more money" by the schools, then found out that the schools were the ones

making "more money" out of the courses.

**Watergate Backlash**—Washington attorney John J. Wilson, whose eloquent arguments before the Senate Watergate committee were tarnished when he attacked Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii) as "that little Jap," is no stranger to the world of racial bigotry.

While Wilson insists that he is not anti-semitic (and this is borne out by his friends among Jewish lawyers) he once earnestly praised a client described by the Anti-Defamation League as a "notorious anti-Semite." Joseph Kamp, on trial 21 years ago for contempt of Congress, got a predictably brilliant defense from Wilson, who described him as "an upright citizen" of "true, fine character."

While such phrases no doubt helped win the case, the fact is that Kamp, according to the prosecutor, was so deep into racism that he advertised in a Ku Klux Klan journal.

Now a member of the ultra-right Liberty Lobby, whose leadership has endorsed neo-Nazis, Kamp denies he is or was an anti-Semite. Wilson advised us he cannot recall hearing Kamp was anti-Semitic.

"The only thing I knew was that he was very strongly anti-Communist," Wilson said.

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