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Oil Directors: 'Cozy, Exclusive Club'

By Jack Anderson

A growing number of congressmen believe that the reckless greed of the oil industry helped bring on the oil crisis. This has stirred talk in the cloakrooms of putting a government checkrein on Big Oil.

The troubled legislators contend that fuel, like the postal service, communications satellites and other government-industry enterprises, is too vital to the national security to be left in irresponsible hands.

The potentates of petroleum not only have put profits ahead of patriotism, but they have kept a tight hold on the facts about fuel. Oil executives must be brought into government, therefore, so the nation can deal intelligently with the energy crisis.

Not only congressmen but federal officials have had it up to the neck with the oil and gas industry. The Federal Trade Commission, for example, has charged Exxon, Texaco, Gulf, Mobil, Standard of California, Standard of Indiana, Shell and Atlantic Richfield with violating antitrust laws in contempt of the consumers.

Sens. Phil Hart (D-Mich.) and James Abourezk (D-S.D.) are seeking to curb Big Oil's power by forcing the oil barons to break their hold on oil from the well to the gas pumps and to give up their interests in natural gas, coal and related industries.

Senators have also learned that oilmen have quietly infiltrated the media, universities, banks, insurance companies and transportation operators, not to mention the Metropolitan Opera, Los Angeles Rams and Boy Scouts.

An unpublished study, conducted by the Center for Science in the Public Interest, shows that directors of all 18 big oil companies hold interlocking directorships, which give them enormous influence upon just about every facet of American life. Although the report is under lock and key in the Senate, we can reveal the highlights:

- Exxon's directors also sit on the boards of six banks, including the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago. Their tentacles reach into the Northwestern Bell System; Mayo Foundation; Toledo, Peoria and Western Railroad; National Pollution Control Committee; Dow Jones; 3M; IBM, and the Committee for National Trade Policy.

- Texaco's directors also serve on the boards of four insurance firms, nine banks and numerous chemical, mining, drug and tobacco companies. They maintain "interlock" with the Metropolitan Opera, two hospitals and the Hollywood Turf Club.

- Gulf, which recently pleaded guilty to making criminal political contributions for President Nixon's campaign, has placed directors in the board rooms of the Mellon National Bank & Trust, General Foods, Ralston Purina, Jones Laughlin Steel, the University of Texas and elsewhere.

- Mobil men sit on the boards of Time, Inc., Princeton and Columbia Universities, American Express, Con Ed, and about 57 other varieties of firms including the H. J. Heinz Co.

- Directors of Atlantic Richfield (ARCO) also have a voice in the counsels of the Boy Scouts, the Eisenhower Fund, the University of Chicago, Pepsico, Lockheed and the Atchison Topeka and Santa Fe. Phillips, another illegal contributor to the Nixon campaign, is represented at Campbell's Soup, Hallmark Cards, Sears Roebuck, United Aircraft, Kansas University and the Falconbridge Nickel Mines, just to name a few.

The pattern is the same for Standard of California, Indiana and Ohio, Shell, Continental, Sun, Union, Cities Service, Getty, Marathon, Amarada Hess and Ashland.

Their directorships range into such various enterprises as New York Life, National Broadcasting Co., several museums, Union Pacific, American Automobile Association, National Biscuit, Red Cross, the New York zoo, United Airlines, AT&T, and American Potato.

All told, the 18 companies have 460 "interlocks" including 132 at banks, 31 with insurance companies, 12 with utilities, 46 with schools, 15 in transportation and 224 with large manufacturing and distributing companies.

Declares the center's confidential report: "Oil company directors . . . form a cozy and exclusive club" able to take "common, if not conspiratorial action . . . Outsiders simply do not know what goes on behind the closed doors."

The center study recommends strict laws to force Big Oil to take its fingers off the control levers of competing or related industries and institutions.

Footnote: Although the figures in the study were obtained early in 1973, the petroleum industry's versatile directors often leave one board room only to move into another, thus making some of the study's specific findings perhaps slightly outdated.

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