

The Washington Merry-Go-Round

Oil-Tainted Seafood Peril Censored

By Jack Anderson

A warning that oil pollution in seafood may encourage cancer, birth defects and other medical horrors has been censored from a scientific study of oil hazards.

The 405-page study was prepared by the august National Academy of Sciences, which is supposed to be out of reach of oil politics.

Yet the cancer warning was deleted like one of President Nixon's expletives from the draft report. It may be only a coincidence that scientists from Shell and Chevron oil companies helped to prepare the report.

Until it is formally adopted, the study is stamped "Privileged Information . . . Not for Publication . . . Do Not Quote or Cite." Nevertheless, we have obtained one of the 100 numbered copies of the confidential volume, including the censored cancer warning.

There is evidence, declares this deleted passage, that oil pollution found in seafoods causes tumors in mice "even at low concentrations" and "may be the significant agents in human" cancer.

The dangers of charcoal-broiled steaks have received wide publicity. But the suppressed section tells of far higher concentrations of cancer-causing oil chemicals in codfish, sardines, crustaceans and mussels.

The suppressed passage cautiously notes that "the mecha-

nism by which chemicals cause the induction of cancer is almost totally unknown and the situation is even worse with respect to the chemical induction of birth defects." The potential hazard can only be measured "in indirect ways," it stresses.

But the censored section warns: "It can be postulated that any significant increase in the amount of ingested PAH (a cancer substance in oil) may increase cancer risk."

PAH is also a suspected cancer-causer in cigarette smoke, burning refuse, power plant emissions, coke smoke and engine exhaust fumes.

These sources blow more PAH into the environment than comes from oil pollution. But the censored section contends: "Even if the probability of cancer induction of an individual is very small, a society must not accept the risk."

The research suggesting oil pollution possibly could cause cancer was omitted, without explanation, from the draft report. In its place, a powder-puff statement was substituted that "the effect of oil spills on human health appears to be negligible."

This infuriated the author of the suppressed section, Dr. James Sullivan of the Center for Science in the Public Interest, who fired off a letter to Richard Vetter, the staff chief in charge of preparing the oil pollution report.

"Certainly," wrote Sullivan sharply, "the effects of marine

oil pollution on human health should have been the primary concern and focus of this report."

Not even the oily taste that seafoods pick up from petroleum pollution is sufficient warning, wrote Sullivan. For the taste buds may not always be able to detect the hidden health hazards in the edible flesh. The Academy, he protested should "not obfuscate the issue with unsubstantiated conjecture."

Footnote: Vetter vigorously denied there had been any censorship of the human hazards section. "It was never in there," he said of the cancer warning. When we tried to go into the substance of the report, he declined to discuss it, explaining: "I think I'm in a very delicate position."

Dirty Trickster—Republicans have tried desperately to divorce their party from the crimes of Watergate. The illegal activities, they claim, were those of President Nixon's reelection committee, not the Grand Old Party.

But it now develops that Sen. Robert Dole (R-Kan.), who headed the party during those turbulent times, has hired one of the President's dirty tricksters as a member of his own Senate staff. Dole faces a tough re-election battle against Rep. Bill Roy (D-Kan.).

The Nixon campaign aide who joined Dole is Roger Stone. According to the Watergate testimony of another Nixon aide,

Bart Porter, Stone donated money to the abortive presidential campaign of Rep. Paul N. (Pete) McCloskey (R-Calif.) in the name of left-wing groups such as the Young Marxist League. The purpose was to hurt McCloskey with conservative voters in the New Hampshire primary.

Stone declined to discuss the substantive nature of the allegations against him. "I didn't do anything illegal; it was poor judgment," he said, "and I regret it." The 21-year-old Dole aide said he had cooperated with both the FBI and the Senate Watergate committee.

A spokesman for Dole said the senator "didn't know about (Stone's Watergate involvement) at the time" Stone was hired. "He's going off the payroll," said the spokesman.

Footnote: Earlier this year, there were reports of another political operator in Dole's camp. Wayne Poucher, a political research consultant for a Tennessee public relations firm, showed up in Kansas digging for scandals to use against Gov. Robert Docking. At that time, Docking looked like Dole's opponent.

Poucher's handwritten notes show he was in Kansas, indicating close ties with Dole. "I will have to give Dole some kind of progress report on Sunday," Poucher wrote. Dole also denies there was a direct link between Poucher's undercover work and his campaign.