US Environmental Protection Agency

Dubious tests of loyalty for committee members

Washington

A DOCUMENT sent anonymously to Senator Gary Hart's office last week has added yet another twist to the controversy surrounding the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The document, a list of scientific advisers and employees of the agency with ratings of their political leanings, was said by the anonymous source to have been compiled by a member of the Reagan transition team who has since gone on to become an official of EPA.

The ratings include such comments as "at technical level rely on 120 per cent; policy level a bleeding heart liberal" (Dr Elliott Montroll, a distinguished mathematical physicist at the University of Maryland); "poison, like Sam Epstein, he is a Nader on toxics" (Dr Matthew

knowledge of the document. "I never prepared the thing or saw anything like it", he said. Cordia said that during the transition and earlier, when he was on the staff of the conservative Heritage Foundation, he did receive many suggestions from industry and conservative groups, but these were never of the negative sort that appear in the list. "Yes, some people would send in comments like 'John Doe's no good, replace him,'" but these, he said, were always unsigned notes that he immediately discarded. Cordia added that in his present position in EPA's Office of Federal Activities, he is not involved in personnel matters or in the Science Advisory Board.

Although the document contains no explicit evidence tying it to Reagan Administration officials, it was apparently common knowledge at the agency that such a list existed. Dr Roy Albert of New York University, who serves on EPA's Carcinogen Assessment Group, said, "I'd heard about this ever since the new administration came in. There were political types on the twelfth floor [the administrator's office] who had received notes from all sorts of political sources commenting on people".

Albert and one other EPA source also said they knew of a similar list, colour-coded according to political leanings, that had been drawn up about EPA senior civil service staff. "My reaction was amusement at first", Albert said, "but now outrage.

It's one of the most detestable things I've encountered."

The document also contains general comments about several of EPA's programmes:

- Radiation programme: Group is responsible for contrived public awareness for the sole purpose to scare. They should all go.

- Toxic substances programme: Get rid of them all. All known by reputation as menaces. . .

- Oceans programme: Mr Cleans committed to hard-line against ocean deposition, not there for advice, but answering the question of what can we say to shore up our position.

- Research and development programme: What have they done to earn their money? Is there a need for any? They all seem to be invidious environmental extremists.

The appearance of this list, whatever its source, will further complicate relations between Congress and EPA, inflamed in recent weeks by the suspicion that the agency in its present form is soft on pollution and by allegations that a \$1,600 million fund for cleaning up pollution has been mismanaged. One political appointee, assistant administrator Miss Rita Lavelle, has already been fired amid charges of collusion with industry polluters and perjury in her testimony before a congressional committee. The latest development is that the administrator, Mrs Anne Burford (formerly Gorsuch), who was cited in December for contempt of Congress for failing to produce subpoenaed documents relating to enforcement of hazardous waste regulations, will no longer be defended in the case by the Department of Justice. This is seen as a not so subtle hint from the White House, which is growing increasingly concerned over the political liability of keeping Burford on.

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Meselson, a biologist at Harvard University); "clean air extremist" (Dr Edward Crandall, a pulmonary physiologist at the University of Pennsylvania); and several variations on "get him out", "a menace", "fair scientist, bad policy" and, in a reference to the endangered species that held up a major dam project, "snail-darter type".

EPA officials deny that such considerations have influenced appointments to the agency's advisory committees. Dr Terry Yosie, director of EPA's Science Advisory Board, said that of those on the list who had been affiliated with the board, most still are. "I fundamentally and totally disagree with a list such as this", he said. "I think it's unethical." Yosie said he was confident that "no members currently appointed were influenced by political considerations".

The EPA official said to have drawn up the list, Louis Cordia, also disclaimed

Lung cancer incidence decreases

THE incidence of lung cancer in Britain, which accounts for 40 per cent of all male cancer deaths, is declining in men aged between 35 and 44. In 1978 there were 44 per cent fewer newly-diagnosed cases registered in males in this age group than in 1963 despite the fact that cigarette sales actually increased over this period from 109,000 million in 1963 to 125,000 million in 1978, reaching a maximum of 137,400 million in 1973. The decrease in cancer incidence is probably accounted for by the widespread changeover from non-filter to filter cigarettes, which now account for over 90 per cent of sales, and, recently, by the introduction of low-tar cigarettes. These took a major hold on the market in 1975 producing an overall reduction of 43 per cent in tar intake. According to Sir Richard Doll of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund, 91 per cent of lung cancer cases in the United Kingdom are caused by cigarette smoking and, since cancer incidence is on average 67 per cent higher in

males any reduction in the carcinogenic effects of cigarettes will bring registrations of lung cancer more in line with the downward trend seen in the incidence of all cancers. □

Source: *Cancer Statistics, Registrations 1962-1978* (HMSO £8; Imperial Cancer Research Fund; Tobacco Advisory Council).