

Detergent Foam Found Endangering Streams of World

By DANIEL RAPOPORT
United Press International
Washington (UPI)—Hamlet's castle at Elsinore and the city of Altoona, Pa., have a problem in common. Both are battling suds from detergents.

At present, both are losing the fight. But Rep. Henry Reuss (D-Wis.) is hopeful that with a little help from Congress, Altoona, and perhaps many more communities, can win.

Reuss has opened a personal and legislative campaign to make all American communities safe from frothy, mountainous detergent foam which is fouling up water and sewage systems and polluting streams.

The culprit, he says, is a petroleum derivative used in the manufacture of most detergents which came into their own here and in Europe after World War II. Unlike soaps made from animal fats, they do not decompose in sewage systems or septic tanks.

Foam Builds Up
As a result, the foam builds up in treatment plants and rivers and lakes. In some areas it even finds its way into the drinking water.

Reuss says studies have shown that the foam can kill fish or drive them from their streams and lakes, but that the major danger is fouled water supplies and clogged sewage systems.

Reuss made his first move by introducing a bill that would forbid use of detergents as they are composed today. By 1965, detergents sold in the U. S. or imported would have to decompose in sewage systems "reasonably quick and completely." The U. S. surgeon general would set the standards.

Reuss says he has been bothered by the problem for

a long time. Last year he traveled through Europe, and saw some illuminating sights.

Europe Has Problem
"At Heidelberg, for example, I witnessed clouds of detergent foam floating down the river Neckar not far from where the Student Prince sang to his love," he told the House. "Today it is possible he would not be able to sing 'Overhead the Moon Is Beaming.' He would not be able to see the moon because of the piling up of detergent foam on the Neckar."

Turning to Denmark, where Shakespeare set his tragedy, "Hamlet," Reuss said:
"At Elsinore, where Prince Hamlet confronted the ghost of his murdered father, on the rampart overlooking the sea, I saw what seemed to be either the ghost's ectoplasm or a gigantic iceberg come down from the north. By all the logic of oceanography, there could not be an iceberg there, and sure enough, there was not. The iceberg was a mountain of detergent foam, floating serenely along on the water."

Reuss Has File
Reuss has an impressive file to prove that he has thoroughly researched his subject. He has examples of detergent foaming in areas such as Suffolk county on Long Island,

Starved Rock park in Illinois, Benton Harbor, Mich. and of course, Altoona.

The congressman feels that detergents are not only esthetically unpleasing, but are an actual health hazard. They not only contribute to the pollution of water supplies, he claims, but prevent other sewage from being treated.

He points to the detergent makers as the people who could cure the problem if they followed an example set by their counterparts in West Germany. He maintains that the German manufacturers—confronted with a law similar to his bill—devised a detergent in which 80 per cent of it disintegrates. Further, he says, the product is only slightly more expensive to produce.

Manufacturers Object
The American detergent manufacturers take sharp exception to most of what Reuss holds to be self-evident. They say his proposals are both impractical and unnecessary. In addition, according to the Soap and Detergent Manufacturers association, the foam is a symptom of pollution, and not pollution itself. (Reuss disputes this point and has some backing from the Public Health service.)

The association also asserts that the industry is now conducting a \$5 million annual

anti-foam research program. The Public Health service is very much aware of detergents. But the agency looks upon them as part of the over-

all problem of water pollution. And since it can't do anything about changing the form in which detergents are manufactured, it is trying to

do something about them once they enter a sewage system.

Part of the plan, ironically, would involve using deter-

gent properties as a cleansing agent—removing other pollutants from a water supply as well as eventually removing itself.



BUBBLES ALARM PEOPLE—Foamy bubbles in the air near vicinity of sewage disposal unit alarm Philadelphia residents. They are shown in 1955 photo here. Rep. Henry Reuss (D-Wis.), is waging a personal and legislative campaign in Washington to save American communities from mountains of detergent found in their sewage systems. (UPI)

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Foods Held Under Refrigeration Top Previous Figures

Washington (UPI)—There was an inventory of 6.6 billion pounds of farm-produced foods held under refrigeration in warehouses on Feb. 1, according to the agriculture department. This was a record for the date.

This is 8 per cent more than stored a year earlier and 26 per cent more than the Feb. 1, 1957-61 average.

Orange concentrate holdings moved up to 49 million gallons by Feb. 1, a gain of 9 million from the previous month. The gain was about equal to the average increase for the month, but was 25 per cent less than a year earlier. Supplies of orange concentrate were about 82 per cent larger than on Feb. 1, 1962, and 87 per cent more than average for the date.

Frozen vegetable supplies were reduced by 103 million pounds to 1,180,000,000 pounds on Feb. 1. For the date, these supplies are 5 per cent more than last year and 48 per cent more than the 1957-61 average. Holdings of all frozen vegetable items except mixed vegetables and french fries were lowered during January.

Frozen fruits in storage on Feb. 1 were down 56 million pounds from a month earlier to 472 million pounds. These stocks are 13 million pounds less than last year but 31 million more than average stocks for the date. The principal reduction, 22 million pounds, was for strawberries, which were down to 137 million pounds on Feb. 1. Supplies of fresh apples totaled 25 million bushels of which

8 million were in controlled atmosphere rooms.

Buttered Lowered
Supplies of butter were lowered seasonally during January and the 7 million pounds net withdrawal left 311 million pounds in storage, compared with 239 million pounds stored on Feb. 1, 1962.

American cheese holdings totaled 360 million pounds. Warehouse stocks of meat totaled 501 million pounds after a January net decline of 5 million pounds. Beef supplies were 165 million pounds, pork 247 million, turkey 290 million, and other poultry 126 million.

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