

Sanitation Aide Dismissed In Dumping of Toxic Waste

By MICHAEL GOODWIN

A superintendent in the city's Sanitation Department has been dismissed for allowing the illegal dumping of liquid wastes in a Staten Island landfill and for paying off a subordinate to help him, officials said yesterday.

The superintendent, John Cassiliano, a 19-year employee of the department, was dismissed at 11:30 P.M. Wednesday, 30 minutes before he was scheduled to retire. Because he was dismissed, he will forfeit a lifetime pension that sanitation officials estimated would have been \$20,000 a year. Mr. Cassiliano can appeal his dismissal through Civil Service procedures. Numerous telephone calls to his home in Brooklyn went unanswered yesterday.

The dismissal of the 53-year-old Mr. Cassiliano followed an inquiry by the department into allegations that liquid toxic wastes had been illegally dumped at three New York City landfills in 1978, 1979 and 1980. The allegations were made in 1980 by truck drivers at a trial in Luzerne County, Pa., that ended in the convictions of three men for illegal dumping in Pennsylvania.

At the trial, the drivers testified that they had been ordered to dump their cargoes in the New York landfills after wastes they had dumped into the bore hole of an abandoned mine shaft near Pittston, Pa., began to leak into the Susquehanna River. They indicated that city sanitation employees had cooperated.

Concern Files for Bankruptcy

The drivers worked for the Hudson Oil Refining Company of Edgewater, N.J., which has since been reorganized and renamed the Quanta Resources Corporation. Last October, the company filed for bankruptcy under Chapter 11 of the Federal Bankruptcy Act.

Pennsylvania authorities reported that the wastes had included cyanide and known carcinogens such as dichlorobenzene and naphthalene, as well as several suspected carcinogens. An investigation by the New York State Senate Select Committee on Crime estimated that 150,000 gallons of the waste had been dumped at three city landfills — the Pennsylvania Avenue fill in Brooklyn, the Pelham Bay fill in the Bronx and one on Staten Island, either the Fresh Kills fill on the Arthur Kill stream or the Brookfield fill on Arthur Kill Road.

Officials said the Department of Sanitation had begun testing the garbage at the landfills to see if there was any trace

of toxins and whether any might show up in drinking water. So far, they added, none has been found.

The Bronx and Brooklyn landfills have been closed for some time, as has the Brookfield site on Staten Island. Sanitation officials said it was likely that other department employees, some of whom may already have retired, were involved. They said that their investigation was continuing and that they had turned over their results to the District Attorneys in the Bronx, Brooklyn and Staten Island for possible criminal prosecutions. They declined to name other suspects.

Annual Salary of \$41,193

Mr. Cassiliano, who was paid \$41,193 a year as the department's senior supervisor of truckfills, was dismissed after an all-day departmental trial Wednesday. Knowing that action had to be taken against Mr. Cassiliano before midnight because of his planned retirement yesterday, officials started the trial early in the morning with the determination to finish in one day.

Testimony, including statements by Mr. Cassiliano that he was not guilty, lasted until 6 P.M. Then JoAnn Ferdinand, the trial commissioner, issued an opinion and sent a draft to Norman Steisel, the Sanitation Commissioner.

Mr. Steisel said he had read about 250 of the 500 pages of testimony and had thought over the testimony "for about 30 minutes" before signing an order dismissing Mr. Cassiliano at 11:30 P.M.

The most serious evidence against him was testimony by another department employee, Anthony Socci, a 62-year-old tractor operator at the Brookfield landfill. Mr. Socci, a 32-year employee of the department, testified that on "frequent occasions" during the midnight-to-8 A.M. shift in 1977, 1978 and 1979, Mr. Cassiliano had paid him \$10 to \$30 to dig holes with his tractor in the garbage. Each time, Mr. Socci said, trailer tankers bearing out-of-state license plates would arrive and dump into the holes what he said was a liquid that smelled like "burnt oil."

Mr. Socci was granted departmental immunity for his testimony, during which he said he had received about \$200. Sanitation officials said that they had no evidence that Mr. Cassiliano had received bribes from the drivers.

Mr. Cassiliano submitted his retirement papers soon after reports were published last month regarding the allegations of illegal dumping.