

Formal Hearing On Oil Spill

By Jack Viets

The Commandant of the Coast Guard last night ordered a formal hearing into the causes of the collision of two Standard Oil tankers Monday which caused the massive oil spill into San Francisco Bay.

Admiral Chester R. Bender issued the convening order from Washington after a one-man hearing here became indefinitely recessed because of a collision between government and conservation forces.

Bender's order named Captain Joseph E.

See Back Page

The Coast Guard Orders Hearing on Oil Spill

From Page 1

Gould, chief of the 12th Coast Guard District's Merchant Marine Safety Division, and Captain C. T. Newman, of Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington, to join with Lieutenant Commander Roy E. Nichols Jr. to hear the case.

While no date for the hearing has been set, the Coast Guard said it will definitely be held in San Francisco.

Such boards are generally convened in the event of "major maritime disasters," the spokesman said, adding that "while in this case there was no loss of life, because of the national and international interest in the case,

it was felt that such a board should be held."

In yesterday's truncated hearing, Nichols had just opened the "casualty investigation of the collision between the tankers when the Sierra Club asked to participate formally in the action.

"I don't see anyone here representing the public interest in the advocate sense," said attorney R. Frederic Fisher, who appeared with Sierra Club executive director Michael McCloskey.

Fisher, who said he was representing both the Sierra Club and the Save San Francisco Bay Association, said he believed his clients were entitled to participate fully in the hearing as "a party of interest" just like the skippers

of the tankers and their owners.

The massive oil spill has caused a "major crisis of public confidence," he said, as well as an environmental disaster, and the public should be allowed to take part in the inquiry into its causes.

"You made your statement. My answer is no," responded Commander Nichols.

"However, if you wish to appeal my decision, you may appeal to the Commandant of the United States Coast Guard."

The hearing was then abruptly recessed for three hours to allow the Commandant and other high Coast Guard officials in Washington to review the situation and the legal problems involved.

But at 1 p.m., the Coast Guard here announced the hearing was "indefinitely recessed until we receive further word from Washington."

Fisher said that so far as he knows, it is unprecedented for conservation groups to participate in Coast Guard hearings on the causes of marine disasters.

But Fisher said the statute that authorizes the hearings and defines the parties of interest as the captain, crew and owners of a vessel also states "any other party of interest" may participate.

However, he said the statute has been "partially gutted" by a Coast Guard regulation based on it which specifies that the Coast Guard hearing officer shall determine the parties who have a direct interest in the proceedings.

"You're damn right I have a direct interest in this," Fisher told newsmen, "and I didn't have a chance to give my evidence."

But the real gut cause of the collision goes back to a simple — and tragic — matter of economics, he said.

Tankers cost money to operate even if they are tied up to a dock instead of earning revenue at sea.

Interns to Strike At S.F. General

From Page 1

hierarchy at the hospital are some 107 residents who have completed their internships and are now beginning to specialize. The residents, in turn rank below the attending house staff of 26 senior physicians who are all members of the University of California Medical School faculty. Several hundred other doctors are on the staff as part-time volunteers.

The interns may not be on top of the medical pyramid, nor can their strike cripple the hospital — but they do most of the medical dirty work, so their actions could certainly make things unpleasant.

The young physicians are seeking no pay increases, nor any immediate cut in their own hours. Their strike, according to Dr. David Richman, a spokesman, is designed to "dramatize the needs of the patients."

"Conditions in this hospital

do not permit the professional and non-professional staff to deliver the quality of care their patients deserve," declared a manifesto from the Interns Association last night.

The doctors cited these grievous problems:

- Delays of up to two weeks in processing patients' x-rays.

- Delays of six hours in administering emergency blood tests.

- Chronic lack of badly-needed emergency and even routine supplies.

- "An excessive work load with a resulting decrease in the quality of patient care."

- Lack of full laboratory facilities for diagnostic tests at night and on holidays.

The interns charged that many of these problems stem from "mismanagement and poor judgment as to priorities." They demanded a reorganization of the hospital administration.