

ollution 'expert' cting for U.S. xposed as fake

By Peter Rickwood Toronto Star

A key U.S. government witness at hearings into the controversial proposal to clean up the deadly Hyde Park chemical dump on the Niagara River has been unmasked as a fraud.

The U.S. Department of Justice has requested that testimony given by David Twedell at the September hearings in Buffalo be struck from the record.

Twedell, whose evidence was regarded as the cornerstone of Washington's claims that the proposed settlement is safe, claimed to be a hydrogeologist with a doc-

torate in geology.

But an investigation by the Environmental Protection Agency, which employed him as a consultant, has revealed that he is a 1979 graduate from the University of Houston in Texas with a bachelor of arts degree in physical science.

Despite the unmasking, Washington says the revelations about Twedell should not alter the tentative agreement which was reached in secret earlier this year between Hooker Chemical, the EPA and New York State.

"I have determined that no changes are

necessary or appropriate at this time," Lamar Miller, technical director of the office of waste program enforcement of the EPA, said in a statement.

"This is outrageous," Toby Vigod, a lawyer with the Canadian Environmental Law Association, who challenged the agreement on behalf of Toronto's Pollution Probe, said yesterday.

"He (Twedell) was the sole hydrogeologist for the (U.S.) government and it casts serious doubts upon the agreement if a Bachelor of Arts degree holder was negotiating on behalf of the EPA.

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The Hyde Park dump, which is believed to contain the world's largest known deposit of the dioxin TCDD — the most deadly chemical ever manufactured, is perched on the edge of the Niagara gorge.

Public hearings into the tentative agreement to clean up the dump which followed a much publicized prosecution by Washington of its owners Hooker Chemical, were held after a storm of public protest on both sides of the border.

Ottawa provided funding to Canadian groups opposed to the plan because of grave concerns about the chemically-ravaged Niagara River.