

Rep. Ford Closely Linked to Lobbyist

By Jack Anderson

It can now be documented that House GOP leader Jerry Ford had a cozy relationship with an influence-peddling Washington lobbyist who repaid Ford's favors with donations to the Republican Party.

As far back as Jan. 27, 1970, we reported that lobbyist Robert Winter-Berger was operating out of Ford's office. We then lacked evidence, however, that Winter-Berger gave campaign cash in return for Ford's intervention in federal cases.

Now Winter-Berger has confessed his relationship with Ford, including the financial quid pro quo, in a book entitled "Washington Pay Off."

Ford has denounced the book as "a bunch of innuendoes and fabrications." The Republican leader said he knew Winter-Berger slightly but could remember only a single instance in which he helped one of the lobbyist's clients. This was an immigration case which Ford said was "meritorious."

Ford's staff told us the office files contain only a half dozen letters relating to Winter-Berger, all of them dealing with the immigration case. Said Ford's top aide, Frank Meyer, of Winter-Berger: "He was not a close friend. He was no different than dozens of people who come into the office."

Our own investigation, however, has uncovered close to 50 letters from Ford's office involving Winter-Berger. We have also turned up several cases in which Ford went to bat for Winter-Berger's clients.

Ford's Favors

Once, Winter-Berger arranged for the GOP leader to give a public endorsement to an organization seeking to standardize the world calendar. Another time, Ford helped Winter-Berger in his efforts to get a diplomatic appointment from the Nixon administration for Francis Kellog, president of International Mining Corporation.

Despite Ford's insistence there was "no quid pro quo" in his relationship with Winter-Berger, we have obtained copies of letters Ford wrote to the lobbyist thanking him for campaign contributions.

A typical letter, written after Winter-Berger donated \$500 to the GOP in 1967, declared: "Many, many thanks for your most generous contribution . . ." The letter is signed simply "Jerry."

Another "Dear Bob" letter, thanking Winter-Berger for \$250, calls the money "wonderful help" and says Ford is "deeply grateful."

Ford's principal help to Winter-Berger was the use of his office. This enabled the lobby-

ist to impress his clients with his friendship with Ford.

The congressman has now denied that Winter-Berger used the office. But letters in our possession show that the lobbyist was close not only with Ford but with members of his staff.

Ford doesn't deny that Winter-Berger made donations to the Republicans but insists that none were made to him. Yet we have found Winter-Berger gave campaign contributions in ways that could be of direct help to Ford.

For example, the lobbyist gave hundreds to the Republican Finance Committee in Kent County, Mich., which happens to be Ford's home base. A 1969 letter of gratitude from the GOP county finance chairman advised Winter-Berger:

"You have become a member of a small and distinguished group of Kent County 'Pace Setters' who donate \$500 or more to the Republican cause."

The letter adds significantly: "Your good friend Jerry Ford was of course, re-elected . . . Your kind of party support was a major factor."

Whiskey Caper

A veteran investigator for the House Interstate Commerce Committee has been

caught running whiskey, gin and wine across interstate lines.

The arrest of the investigator, William Druhan, is all the more embarrassing because his boss, Chairman Harley Staggers (D-W. VA.) is one of Congress' most determined teetotalers.

Druhan and his immediate superior, committee counsel Daniel Manelli, mindful of Staggers' abstemious ways, have kept him in the dark about the arrest for six months.

The incident occurred on Feb. 3 when Druhan bought 40 bottles of bourbon, scotch, gin and wine for a party in Washington. Before delivering the booze, however, he crossed into Virginia on another errand.

A Virginia trooper was following him in an unmarked car. He caught Druhan near the Pentagon. The charges were dropped after Druhan passed a four-month probation without further incidents.

Asked about the episode, Druhan said he "had no intention of doing anything wrong." He acknowledged, however, that he had planned to take some of the leftover liquor into Maryland. This, too would have broken the law.