

Maritime Head Passing Hat for Blair

By Jack Anderson

Helen Delich Bentley, the salty-tongued federal maritime chairman, has been soliciting political donations from the same shipping executives whose companies are regulated by her commission.

Despite the obvious impropriety, she was asked by no less than Vice President Agnew to pass the hat in shipping circles for C. Stanley Blair, the Republican candidate for governor of Maryland. This would appear to violate federal laws which prohibit commissioners from soliciting or accepting favors from anyone in the industries they regulate.

Confronted by the evidence, Mrs. Bentley acknowledged to my associate, Brit Hume, that she has contacted "about 10 top-echelon shipping executives to tell them the vice president is personally interested in the Blair campaign and would like them to help in any way they could."

She asked some of them to buy tickets to a black-tie, \$1,000-per-couple ball that Agnew hosted last night (Friday) at the fashionable Washington Hilton Hotel to raise money for Blair.

Mrs. Bentley also admitted attending a Blair fund-raising conference Sept. 8 in the Manhattan office of Spyros Skouras, the former 20th Century Fox movie magnate, who is now chairman of Prudential Grace Shipping Lines.

Skouras played a key role at the 1968 Republican convention in obtaining the vice presidential nomination for his fellow Greek-American. After Richard Nixon accepted Agnew as his running mate, Skouras agreed to raise money for the GOP campaign chest.

Mrs. Bentley admitted to Hume that she flew to the Manhattan meeting in a private plane as the guest of J. Walter Jones, Agnew's political confidante and financial adviser. Jones also heads the money drive for Blair's campaign.

"I was asked by the vice president's office to go over a list of names with them," said Mrs. Bentley, "names of people within the shipping industry." She remained at the meeting for an hour, she said, then left to attend to other business. Her return fare to Washington was paid by the taxpayers.

Mrs. Bentley is an unorthodox Federal Maritime Committee Chairman who believes in settling maritime matters privately with shipping heads. Out of these backstage huddles come multi-million-dollar decisions affecting the big shipping companies. Only the most foolish shipping executive, therefore, would ignore an appeal from her for a political contribution.

Like Mrs. Bentley, Skouras also contacted other shipping executives in Blair's behalf. The old man was less candid

than Mrs. Bentley, however, in discussing the political huddle in his office.

He insisted to this columnist that Mrs. Bentley had dropped by to see him "on business," and that the subject of Blair's campaign had come up only incidentally.

Footnote: Moonlighting to raise money is nothing new for Helen Bentley. In her previous job as maritime editor for the mighty Baltimore Sun, she did a booming side business as a public relations consultant for the industry she was supposed to write about objectively.

On one occasion, she pulled down \$2,000 for merely mapping out suggestions for an industry public relations campaign. "I did a lot of moonlighting," she acknowledged, "but I always did it with the approval of the paper."

Congress Neglects Bills

Congress has let the military money bills fall three months behind schedule while the members roam around the world on vacations and junkets.

The worst offender is House Armed Services Chairman L. Mendel Rivers, (D-S.C.), who let the measures gather dust while he watched a gala air show in England.

While Rivers gallavanted, some of his more dedicated committee members stayed at home to get the work of Con-

gress done. Among those who stuck to business are:

Representatives Les Arands (R-Ill.), Charles Benner (D-Fla.), Jack Brinkley (D-Ga.), Lucien Nedzi (D-Mich.), Alvin O'Konski (R-Wis.), Otis Pike (D-N.Y.), Mel Price (D-Ill.), and Charles Whalen (R-Ohio).

Sons of Italy

The Sons of Italy Supreme Council called upon President Nixon the other day to thank him for ordering the Justice Department to stop using the terms "Mafia" and "La Cosa Nostra" as synonyms for organized crime.

"We shall never forget what you did to bring this about," declared their leader, A. V. Cortese. He referred to the President as "our brother in every sense of the word."

The President spent 45 minutes telling them the history of his White House office.

"Many newer Americans," he said, "have greater loyalty to the country because they appreciate the greatness of America."

Secretary of Transportation John Volpe, who accompanied the Italian-American delegation to the White House, told how his wife had been captivated by Nixon after their first meeting.

"She was so impressed," said Volpe, "that she offered to speak for him. This was more than she ever offered to do for me in my political campaigns."

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