

Fauntroy Guilty in Bank Case

Ex-Delegate Takes Responsibility for False Financial Report

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Walter E. Fauntroy, who represented the District in the House for 20 years, was charged yesterday with filing a false congressional financial report in 1989 and has agreed to plead guilty.

Fauntroy, a former city commissioner and onetime mayoral candidate, has entered a plea bargain with the Justice Department that requires prosecutors to recommend that he be sentenced to probation when he appears before U.S.

District Judge Paul L. Friedman tomorrow.

In a five-page statement, Fauntroy took responsibility for reporting a \$23,887 charitable contribution to his church before it was made and omitting a \$24,500 loan he received when he filled out a financial disclosure form in May 1989.

"My parents taught me in my childhood, and my Christian faith instructs me in my maturity, to take responsibility for any and all errors that I make. To err is human," he said, describing the falsehoods as honest mistakes.

The felony charge against Faun-

troy—in the form of a criminal information filed in federal court yesterday—grew out of the ongoing Justice Department investigation of the House Bank. He is the 10th person who has been charged in the scandal, which began in 1991 after it was disclosed that several representatives routinely had overdrawn their House bank accounts without penalty.

Fauntroy, 62, has been a political force in the District for years, first as a lieutenant who helped the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. organize the 1963 March on Washington and lat-

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er as pastor of New Bethel Baptist Church in the Shaw section of Northwest Washington.

When President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act a year later, Fauntroy was there, one of a handful of black leaders invited to the White House ceremonies. In the years before home rule, he won a presidential appointment as one of three Washington commissioners.

As the District's delegate to the House from 1971 to 1990, Fauntroy played a key role in steering through Congress a bill that gave District resi-

dents the right to elect city officials. He traveled throughout the nation in 1978 in an unsuccessful attempt to win approval for a constitutional amendment that would have given District residents full voting representation in Congress.

According to the charge, Fauntroy used the \$23,887 gift to comply with a limit on outside income for members of Congress. Under House rules, no member is allowed outside earnings of more than 30 percent of his congressional salary. He also is charged with failing to report a \$24,500 loan from Dominion Bank.

In his statement, Fauntroy said he

had "every intention" of making the charitable contribution to his church as he always did at the end of a year but that 1988 was "one of those years, quite frankly, when I simply tried to do too much for too many people."

He said he donated \$11,000 he hoped would save from foreclosure the birth home of philosopher Howard Thurman in Daytona Beach, Fla. It did not. Fauntroy said he also had to pay numerous expenses he incurred stumping for Jesse L. Jackson and Massachusetts Gov. Michael S. Dukakis in the 1988 presidential campaign.

He said he decided to sell two pieces of property he owned so he

could make his annual contribution to New Bethel. "I fully expected at the time that it would take only a short while to complete the sale, but it took longer than I had hoped to find a buyer," he said.

Fauntroy said he reported the gift to the church in the May 15, 1989, financial disclosure report, "confident that the funds would be there. Unfortunately, at the last minute, the settlement was delayed for reasons beyond my control." On June 12, 1989, the money was deposited and the check he had given the church cleared.

"I realize that I should have dis-

cussed my problem with the Ethics Committee in December," Fauntroy said. "I erroneously believed that I would not be held strictly accountable if the money were contributed once the sales were made, and, knowing that the record would clearly show that I made the contribution when it came, I thought I had handled the situation properly. I was in error. I did not adequately consider the consequences of failing to disclose in my report the details of what actually had occurred."

Fauntroy said he simply forgot to list the loan from Dominion Bank. "I never had any intention to evade my obligation to comply with the rule limiting outside income or to obtain any personal benefit, and the Justice Department has not suggested that I did," he said.