

Agnew Case Recalls Nixon in '52, '60

By Drew Pearson

There is an important principle involved in the conflict of interest allegations by the New York Times regarding Gov. Spiro T. Agnew.

There is also an important parallel between Agnew's case and that reported by the New York Post involving a previous Vice President — Richard Nixon.

Mr. Nixon can't charge that it is gutter politics to review the facts, because they arose in 1952 in the matter of his \$18,000 expense fund and in 1960 in the matter of the \$205,000 Howard Hughes "loan" to Don Nixon, which has never been paid back. So this is no last-minute charge, but rather a diagnosis of an important principle.

That principle is whether there shall be two standards of ethical conduct, one for those running for the highest offices in government, another for lesser officials.

To illustrate: When Robert McNamara was up for confirmation as Secretary of Defense, he was required to sell around \$1 million worth of Ford Motor Company stock. And when Charles E. Wilson became Secretary of Defense in the Eisenhower Administration, he was required to sell \$2 million worth of General Motors stock.

It was not that the Senate distrusted either McNamara or

Wilson. They were known to be honorable men. It was, rather, the principle that no public official should be in a position of a conflict of interest.

Likewise with Gov. Agnew's stock interest in the Chesapeake National Bank and the deposit of state funds in private banks while he was Governor; also with Nixon's personal fund when he was a Senator, and the Howard Hughes \$205,000 loan when Nixon was Vice President. Nixon gave the excuse in the first instance that he used the \$18,000 for office expenses; in the second case, that his brother faced bankruptcy. Others have faced bankruptcy but have not had a brother who was Vice President and whose influence helped them get a largely unsecured loan.

Truman Got Headlines

I was instrumental in exposing some minor conflicts of interest during the Truman Administration, including hams, mink coats, deep freezes. I am quite sure that President Truman extended no favors to the company which gave Gen. Harry Vaughan a deep freeze for Mrs. Truman. But the newspapers headlined the gift and the editorial writers ate it up.

Newspapers during the Nixon \$18,000 expense fund revelation were far more re-

strained. The Omaha World-Herald buried the story on page 52. As a result, and also because of an emotional Nixon telecast, the public had no idea of the extent to which Nixon performed favors or whether he cast his vote in the Senate to benefit the contributors to his fund.

He intervened at the Justice Department on behalf of the tax problems of Dana Smith, who had raised the \$18,000 for him. He intervened with the American Ambassador in Havana on behalf of Dana Smith after he incurred a \$4000 gambling debt at the Sans Souci casino and defaulted on his check.

Nixon voted right down the line of favor of the oil companies, and even sent out copies of Tidelands Oil literature under his own frank. Fifteen of the contributors to his expense fund were oilmen.

Eleven of Nixon's donors were big real estate men. Nixon, in turn, voted to cut public housing from 50,000 to 500 units; voted to shorten rent controls by four months; and finally, introduced an amendment to the defense bill aimed at sidetracking public housing.

It has been the failure of Congress to vote funds for public housing and slum clearance which has contributed materially to the present decay of the big cities and to crime in the streets. Mr. Nixon is

now critical of crime in the streets, and proposes public housing to help remedy the plight of the cities. But as a Senator he voted with the real estate men who contributed to his secret fund.

Private Oil Bill

Two of Nixon's contributors were Tyler Woodward and William O. Anderson, who had filed applications for a lease to explore for oil on a military reservation, Camp Roberts, Calif. They found that oil exploration was not permissible on U.S. military property. Whereupon Nixon introduced a bill, S-1029, which would permit private individuals to stake out oil leases on military property.

The issue of Agnew's and Nixon's conflicts of interest is therefore, extremely important. And the public has a right to know about them. They cannot be brushed aside by a threat of a libel suit against the New York Times, or a Nixon charge that "This is the lowest kind of gutter politics." Nor should they have been smothered by an emotional telecast as was the case when Nixon ran for Vice President the first time.

Drew Pearson will make his final election prediction in his broadcast with Jack Anderson over radio WTOP Saturday at 9:40 a.m. and 6:40 p.m.

© 1968, Bell-McClure Syndicate, Inc.