

'\$100,000 Is A Lot of Money'

Following are excerpts from testimony before the Senate Select Watergate committee yesterday by Orin E. Atkins, chairman of the board of Ashland Oil, Inc. Questioning Atkins in the portion excerpted was James Hamilton, an assistant chief counsel to the committee:

Hamilton: Mr. Atkins, were you contacted in early March of 1972 by Maurice Stans?

Atkins: Yes, sir . . . Mr. Stans called me on the telephone.

Hamilton: What was the purpose of Mr. Stans' contact?

Atkins: He was soliciting a contribution for President Nixon's campaign.

Hamilton: Did Mr. Stans request that any specific amount be contributed?

Atkins: Yes, sir.

Hamilton: And what was that?

Atkins: \$100,000 . . .

Hamilton: Well, did you feel that Mr. Stans was requesting that the contribution be one from you personally or was he soliciting in your opinion, a contribution from the corporation?

Atkins: Well, that is a difficult question to answer in respect to Mr. Stans did not make any comment as to where the contribution should come from. He might have had one thing in mind and I may have had something else in mind.

Hamilton: What was your impression?

Atkins: Well, the impression again is probably not a precise word but in my own mind it could only have come from one place, from the corporation.

Hamilton: Why did you hold that opinion?

Atkins: Well, a \$100,000 is a awful lot of money and it would not be practical to raise it from any other source . . .

Hamilton: Did Mr. Stans suggest to you that the money be contributed before the 7th day of April,

1972?

Atkins: Yes sir.

Hamilton: And what was the reason for that suggestion that Mr. Stans gave you?

Atkins: Contributions prior to that date were supposed to be secret and not disclosed.

Hamilton: Whose anonymity was Mr. Stans attempting?

Atkins: Well, again I am not sure whose nonymity Mr. Stans was attempting to protect, I was interested in protecting my company and myself.

Hamilton: But it is fair to say, I think, as you have stated that Mr. Stans never expressly requested that the corporation make a campaign contributions?

Atkins: That is right . . .

Hamilton: What were the reasons that prompted you to make this illegal corporate gift?

Atkins: Well, again the situation today is difficult to rationalize. We were not seeking any particular privilege or benefit because we don't do anything signifi-

cant business with the government. I think all we were attempting to do was to assure ourselves of a forum to be heard. Were we a larger factor in our respective industries we can expect to have access to administrative officials in the executive branch of government without—with ease, but being a relatively unknown corporation despite our size, we felt we needed something that would be sort of a calling card, something that would get us in the door and make our point of view heard.

We don't expect, we didn't expect those points of view to be accepted but only from the point of view of being able to express them and that was our thinking or rationale as to why we were interested in making any type of contribution . . .

Hamilton: Then in the spring of 1973, Stans wanted

you to give him a list of individuals who had contributed to the \$100,000 amount, is that correct?

Atkins: Yes, sir . . .

Hamilton: Did you feel he was trying to make you create a list that didn't exist?

Atkins: Well, I believe the conversation, to be as precise as I recall it, was to the effect that Mr. Stans told Mr. (Clyde) Webb (of Ashland Oil) that in all probability, there was a list of contributors, that it had not come from him, that it was floating around, and that we were on it, we being Ashland Oil, were shown on it as being a contributor, and that he was trying to reconstruct the list and would like to have from us any information that we could reconstruct.

Hamilton: Mr. Atkins, did you get a letter from Mr. Kenneth Parkinson, who is the counsel for the Finance Committee to Re-elect the President, that he wrote on July 9, 1973, that requested information on the source of the contribution?

Atkins: Yes sir. . .

Hamilton: This letter states that you and your wife had recently informed the finance committee that the two of you were the source of the \$100,000. Had you so informed the finance committee?

Atkins: No sir. I had assumed when I saw this letter that it must have come from President Nixon's Christmas card list. It had my home address on it, my wife's name on it. The only contact I ever had with the committee were any contributions through the office and in the name of Ashland Oil. I just concluded when I saw it that, I guess you refer to it as Rose Mary's list (Rose Mary Woods, Mr. Nixon's personal secretary); they must have picked it up and taken my home address off it. It was more a social thing than a business transaction.

Hamilton: Did you respond to Mr. Parkinson's letter through your counsel and inform Mr. Parkinson that corporate funds had been used?

Atkins: Yes sir. . .

Hamilton: I would like to show you a copy of a letter

written to Mr. Stans on July 16 by your counsel, Mr. (Fred M.) Vinson (Jr.), and ask you to identify this.

Atkins: Yes sir, that letter was a letter written by Mr. Vinson on our behalf informing the committee that the contribution had been from corporate funds and requesting a refund.

Hamilton: And this letter does state that the finance committee was not informed and had no way of knowing that this contribution originated from a corporate source?

Atkins: That is right. . .

Hamilton: But it is still your testimony, is it not, that when you initially talked to Mr. Stans, you did have the impression, or at least in your mind, that the money he was asking for was corporate money.

Atkins: In my mind, there was never any doubt that that is where it was going to come from.