

Gifts of \$1.1 Million Listed by Ashland

\$110/75

By Evans Witt
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Ashland Oil, Inc., doled out more than \$1.1 million in illegal campaign contributions in this country and in payments to foreign officials, including \$150,000 to the president of Gabon, it was disclosed yesterday.

The campaigns of current members of the U.S. Senate and House as well as former President Nixon and many Kentucky politicians received part of \$724,000 in illegal political donations, Ashland admitted in documents filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

This is the first time the SEC has forced a corporation to identify recipients of such contributions and payments. Corporations are prohibited from contributing to federal campaigns.

Among American politicians receiving illegal contributions from the company was the late Rep. Michael J. Kirwan, a Democrat from Ohio, who got \$60,000.

Rep. Wilbur D. Mills (D-Ark.) received \$50,000 that the documents indicate Mills was going to donate to other Democratic candidates.

Among present and former senators, the late Allen J. Ellender, a Louisiana Democrat, received \$10,000 in 1969 and another \$10,000 shortly before his death in 1972.

Other Senate candidates, all now incumbents, who received funds include Indiana Democrats Vance Hartke, \$3,500, and Birch Bayh, \$3,000, both in 1968; Milton R. Young (R-N.D.), \$3,500, also in 1968; Hubert H. Humphrey (D-Minn.), three contributions totaling \$8,000 in 1970; and James O. Eastland (D-Miss.), Carl T. Curtis (R-Neb.), John J. Sparkman (D-Ala.) and J. Bennett Johnston (D-La.), \$5,000 each in 1972.

A contribution of \$13,000 went to Sen. Wendell H. Ford (D-Ky.) when he was cam-

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paing for governor of Kentucky in 1971.

Ashland said it paid \$150,000 to Albert Bernard Bongo, president of Gabon, where it has oil drilling rights, and \$52,000 to two other officials.

Officials in Libya, Nigeria and the Dominican Republic received other Ashland payments, including \$2,500 spent on the wedding of Omar Shali, a Libyan national who was an adviser to King Idris.

The contributions were often given in the names of individual company officers, which did not explicitly indicate the actual source of the funds.

Contributions also were made between 1968 and 1972 to a number of losing Senate candidates as well as for other races including several gubernatorial campaigns.

Ashland filed the names of recipients of contributions with the SEC only after the commission threatened continued court action if the com-

pany refused.

The firm said "no useful purpose" would be served by disclosure and refused to release the names itself even after the documents had been filed with the SEC.

SEC officials have said that decisions on making public names of recipients of similar funds from other companies will be made on a case-by-case basis.

The documents confirmed reports that former President Nixon's campaigns received \$200,000 in contributions, and that the \$100,000 given to his 1972 re-election effort was returned to the company by the campaign.

Robert S. Strauss, Democratic national chairman, received a \$50,000 contribution from the company.

Much of the campaign money went to Kentucky politicians.

Republican Louie Nunn's campaigns for governor of Kentucky and for the U. S. Senate received \$40,800 from Ashland. His Senate campaign returned \$8,000.

Former Rep. John C. Watts, a Kentucky Democrat, received \$25,000 from 1968 through 1972.

Democratic Senate candidate Katherine Peden received \$14,000 in her unsuccessful 1968 campaign.

Henry Ward, a Democratic gubernatorial candidate in 1957, received \$5,000.

The list even included a \$2,500 donation to Charles Gartrell, when he ran for mayor of Ashland, Ky., and \$5,000 to John McDonald, in his race for a township supervisor's post in Niles, Mich.

Gov. Arch A. Moore of West Virginia, a Republican whose brother was reportedly employed by the company, received \$23,000.

Ashland has been fined for making the illegal campaign contributions, and the Watergate special prosecutor's office has closed its case against the company in exchange for its guilty pleas in those instances. The deadline for prosecuting donors or recipients is three years from the date of such contributions, which would appear to preclude action against most, if not all, of the recipients named.

Three top officials in the company have agreed to reimburse the company for \$325,000 of the illegal contributions.

Ashland also has admitted that part of the more than \$98,000 it received in secret payments from the Central Intelligence Agency was mixed in the fund from which the illegal contributions were made.