

Corporate Donors Nudged to Confess

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The Finance Committee to Re-elect the President, working with the office of Special Watergate Prosecutor Archibald Cox, had provided an indirect incentive to disclosure of illegal corporate contributions, it was learned yesterday.

The stimulus took the form of letters to approximately 30 persons who contributed more than \$1 million in currency to President Nixon's re-election campaign before the present election-campaign financing law become effective April 7, 1972.

Committee counsel Kenneth Wells Parkinson, who drafted the letters and pre-cleared them with Cox's office, said the approximately 30 recipients were all of those named as currency donors on a still-secret list supplied by Assistant to the President Rose Mary Woods in a suit brought by Common Cause.

Without saying so, the letters served notice that contributions from corporate treasuries disguised as personal gifts might be investigated and exposed.

The letters did not say this had happened, Parkinson said. He re-emphasized that the committee never solicited or knowingly accepted corporate contributions.

Common Cause, a citizens' lobby, sued the committee last September to compel full disclosure of its finances before April 7, 1972, under the old Corrupt Practices Act of 1925.

Last Tuesday, U.S. District Court Judge Joseph C. Waddy ordered the committee to file by Sept. 28 "a complete and accurate" account of its receipts and expenditures in the 15-month period before the new law took effect.

The committee had sought such an order with the reservation that it not be ~~deemed an admission of liability~~ or a confession of error.

In the expectation that such an order would be approved, and knowing that he was obligated to supply the clerk of the House of Representatives with "the most accurate information" available to the committee, Parkinson drafted a letter to the approximately 30 currency donors, he told a reporter.

Speaking without a copy of the letters at hand, Parkinson said he told the donors that he needed to verify the accuracy of the sums and sources of currency gifts on the Rose Mary Woods list, which, he said in the interview, is "inaccurate in some respects."

The committee's own records of currency contributions were destroyed, its

chairman and former treasurer, Maurice H. Stans and Hugh W. Sloan Jr., have said.

Without claiming that his letters were the cause, Parkinson noted that they were sent out before illegal corporate contributions of \$55,000 by the chairman of American Airlines and of \$100,000

by the chairman of Ashland Oil were publicly acknowledged to prosecutor Cox earlier this month. Parkinson said the letters added to "pressures" generated by the Common Cause litigation and Cox.

Cox has urged other executives who may have contributed corporate funds to

come forward, hinting that by so doing they may be spared prosecution of themselves. Thus far, none but George A. Spater of American Airlines and Orin E. Atkins of Ashland Oil has publicly responded. They said the finance committee and its solicitors had not known their gifts were illegal.