

U.S. Charges Nixon Committee Violated Election Finance Law

By Morton Mintz

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The Justice Department yesterday accused the Finance Committee to Re-elect the President of eight criminal violations of the election-financing law.

The department also filed criminal complaints against

three congressional candidates who did not heed repeated warnings by the Clerk of the House and then the department to submit reports on campaign contributions and expenditures.

Known technically as criminal informations, filed in U.S. District Court here

are the first under the Federal Elections Campaign Act, which took effect April 7.

The complaints against the congressional candidates are the first of their kind ever. Nonfiling of financial reports first became an offense under the Corrupt Practices Act of 1925

The complaint against the finance committee, which was headed by Maurice H. Stans, former Secretary of Commerce, contains eight separate counts. Each carries a maximum penalty of \$1,000 fine and one year in prison. No person was named a defendant, however, so no one could go to jail.

The complaint cited financial transactions last summer in which the committee allegedly passed cash sums—\$12,000, \$12,000 and \$5,300—through its then treasurer, Hugh P. Sloan Jr., to its then legal advisor, G. Gordon Liddy.

The committee obtained no receipts from Liddy and maintained no records, as required by the new law, on the purpose for which each expenditure had been made, the complaint said.

The committee also violated the law by failing to report the cash transactions to the General Accounting Office, and by failing to obtain a receipt for and report to the GAO an additional \$2,000 spent by Liddy, the complaint said.

The \$5,300 was reportedly routed through Herbert L. Porter, the committee's scheduling director, for delivery to Liddy.

Two of the congressional candidates named in crimi-

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nal complaints were Democrats who lost in their respective primaries last spring. They were Charles W. Johnson of Ohio's 17th District, which encompasses several counties in the east-central part of the state, and William C. Haden, of the Pennsylvania's 14th District, encompassing Pittsburgh and Allegheny County.

The third candidate, Fritjof P. Thygeson, won the nomination of the Peace and Freedom Party from California's 40th District, which includes west-central San Diego County and two-thirds of the city of San Diego, but was defeated in November.

All told, the Clerk of the House referred roughly 3,000 House candidates and committees to the department. Most complied after the department sent them warning letters. More criminal complaints are expected to be filed, however.

A finance committee spokesman said the complaint against it "allegedly refers to technical and unintentional failures to comply with certain sections of a complex new election law. It is the policy of this committee to fully comply with all election laws. We have always sought to do so."

Common Cause, a citizens' lobby that is suing the committee to compel disclosure of all contributors who gave an estimated \$15 million to \$20 million before the new law took effect, welcomed the Justice Department action but termed it "rather belated."

The time to act was before the November election, "when it mattered," said staff counsel Kenneth J. Guido. The law assured "expeditious treatment" of suits the department might bring, Guido pointed out.

Liddy and Porter figured in the prosecution's opening statement at the Watergate bugging trial Wednesday.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Earl J. Silbert told the jury

that Liddy's committee superiors had given him \$235,000 in cash for various assignments, but that the prosecution could account for only \$50,000 of this. Some of the assignments came from Porter, Silbert said.

The complaint against the finance committee was related to several "apparent and possible" violations by President Nixon's re-election organization that the GAO referred to the department on Aug. 26.

The GAO listed the possible offenses as outgrowths

of the bugging of Democratic National Committee offices in the Watergate.

Among several other cases referred by the GAO but still pending are three "apparent violations" by the campaign organization of Democratic presidential candidate George S. McGovern. The GAO staff had dismissed these as too "technical" to warrant being sent to the department. Sen. Bob Dole (Kans.), chairman of the GOP National Committee, had initiated the complaints.