

Gulf Oil Silent on Donations

By Morton Mintz
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Gulf Oil Corp., which pleaded guilty last month to making illegal corporate campaign contributions to presidential candidates, has declined to tell a reporter whether its contributions to Senate candidates also came from the company treasury.

Sen. Howard H. Baker Jr. (R-Tenn.), vice chairman of the Senate select Watergate committee, said in July that he had received \$5,000 from Claude C. Wild Jr., Gulf's vice president for government relations, before April 7, 1972, when a strict election-financing disclosure law became effective.

"We took it believing it was a personal contribution," an aide to Baker says.

Sen. James A. McClure (R-Idaho), got \$2,500 from Wild, also before April 7, 1972, and, like Baker, disclosed it although he was not required to do so.

Aides to McClure say they believed the contribution came from Wild's personal funds. One of them told Patricia Davis, a Washington Post researcher, that McClure had served in the House on an energy unit that had frequent contacts with many oil industry representatives, including Wild.

Wild refused to reply to a reporter's inquiry as to the source of the contributions to Baker and McClure and, possibly, other legislators.

Gulf chairman B. R. Dorsey also refused to disclose the source of the money when he was asked about it Dec. 6 while waiting to testify at a Senate inquiry into competition in the oil industry.

His initial response was that "the entire matter" had been aired before the Senate committee and in the prosecution brought by the office of the Watergate Special Prosecutor.

The reporter told Dorsey

there had been no mention of Gulf contributions to congressional candidates either before the committee, which is authorized to deal only with the 1972 presidential election, or in U.S. District Court.

There, on Nov. 13, Gulf and Wild pleaded guilty to having illegally contributed \$125,000 in corporate funds—\$100,000 to the Finance Committee to Re-elect the President, under claimed "intense" pressure, plus \$15,000 to the campaign of Rep. Wilbur D. Mills (D-Ark.) for the Democratic presidential nomination, and \$10,000 to the quest of Sen. Henry M. Jackson (D-Wash.) for the same nomination.

Dorsey refused to discuss the matter further.

Phillips Petroleum and its former chairman, W. W. Keeler,

er, pleaded guilty Dec. 5 to having made an illegal \$100,000 contribution to the Nixon re-election committee.

Keeler also made a \$3,000 contribution to the successful Senate campaign of Sen. Dewey F. Bartlett (R-Okla.), who told a reporter he had been careful to accept only personal contributions. Keeler could not be reached.

Gulf chairman Dorsey first acknowledged the firm's \$100,000 contribution to the Nixon organization in August, when he assured full cooperation with the special prosecutor. By that time the Finance Committee had alerted pre-April, 1972, contributors that their contributions would have to be disclosed because of a lawsuit brought by Common Cause.

The contributors to Jackson and Mills were first revealed when Gulf and Wild pleaded guilty, to non-willful violations, before Judge George L. Hart Jr. Wild told Hart the contributions were "a mistake in judgment and certainly inexcusable."

The judge termed illegal contributions worse than a crime of violence "because you're corrupting our government." He addressed the same remark to Ashland Oil Co. and its chairman, Orin E. Atkins. They also were pleading guilty to having made an illegal \$100,000 contribution to the Finance Committee.

Hart fined Gulf and Ashland each \$5,000 and Wild and Atkins each \$1,000. Gulf was the nation's 11th largest industrial corporation in sales in 1972, when it was also the fourth largest oil company.

A spokesman for Jackson said on the day of the court proceeding that the senator had been unaware that the Wild contribution had come from Gulf's treasury and would refund it. Jackson is chairman of the Senate Interior Committee, which has major responsibilities for energy matters.

Jackson and Rep. Mills were the only two candidates for the Democratic presidential nomination who refused to disclose their pre-April, 1972, contributions.

Mills is chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, which long has accorded favored tax treatment to the oil industry. In 1972, Gulf paid federal taxes at the rate of 1.2 per cent, lower than any other major oil company.