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**Rockefeller Gifts Queried;
\$550,000 Went to Ronan**

By LINDA CHARLTON
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WASHINGTON, Oct. 8—Senator Howard W. Cannon, chairman of the Senate Rules Committee, has asked Vice President-designate Nelson A. Rockefeller to supply "detailed background information" about the financial gifts he has made to his aides and associates.

Mr. Cannon's request came the day after disclosures last night that Mr. Rockefeller had made a gift of \$550,000 to William J. Ronan, now chairman of the New York-New Jersey Port Authority, by canceling a series of loans made to Dr. Ronan during their 18-year association.

The chairman's evident concern, expressed amid a flurry of rumors here that the gifts disclosed thus far are only "the surface," raised the strong possibility that the committee may re-open its hearings. [An account of Dr. Ronan's associa-

tion with the Rockefeller family appears on Page 30.]

Hugh Morrow, Mr. Rockefeller's press secretary, said Senator Cannon had sent Mr. Rockefeller a "personal and confidential" letter asking for the information "on certain facts the committee has had for several weeks," a reference to Mr. Rockefeller's gift-tax returns.

Mr. Cannon's request, which committee sources refused to either confirm or deny, seemed to indicate that the committee's hearings on Mr. Rockefeller's nomination might be re-opened in the light of recent disclosures of extremely large gifts by the former New York Governor to aides.

These include the cancellation last spring of \$550,000 in debts owed Mr. Rockefeller by Dr. Ronan, a close and influen-

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tial Rockefeller associate since 1956.

Senator Mike Mansfield of Montana, the Senate majority leader, said today that the recent disclosures about this and other Rockefeller gifts "could well reopen" the Rules Committee's hearings. The hearings were recessed Sept. 26, subject to recall by Mr. Cannon. An aide to the Nevada Senator said Mr. Cannon had made no decision, adding that it was "an option that is open."

Discussion Likely

The subject is expected to be discussed tomorrow morning, when the Rules Committee holds a closed meeting. At least one member, Senator Claiborne Pell, Democrat of Rhode Island, said that "it will come up."

Senator Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania, the Senate minority leader who also is a member of the committee, said that he had "seen nothing which has impaired the integrity of Governor Rockefeller in any way." Mr. Scott also said he had heard nothing about re-opening the public hearings.

Hearings by the House Judiciary Committee on Mr. Rockefeller's confirmation are not ex-

pected to get under way until at least mid-November. The chairman of the committee, Representative Peter W. Rodino Jr., a New Jersey Democrat, would not comment today on the question of Mr. Rockefeller's largesse. Other members of the committee, who have promised that their investigation of Mr. Rockefeller will be "tougher" than that of the Senate committee, expressed concern about the issue.

'Raises Big Qualms'

Representative Jerome R. Waldie, Democrat of California, said, "Sure, it raises big qualms in my mind." He also said he thought it vital for the committee to find out the reasons that Mr. Rockefeller made such gifts. "If the reason is to further your political career," he added, "that's important to know."

Mr. Waldie said that he found it "beyond comprehension" that the Senate committee, with the some information available, had not questioned Mr. Rockefeller about the financial gifts.

Another committee source, who asked not to be identified, said, "I can't discuss specifics, but there are others" who have received large gifts from Mr. Rockefeller. The source added that there were "a lot of peo-

ple involved — public officials and nonpublic officials." The source also said he thought that the full extent of these gifts "should be revealed—and hopefully by him [Mr. Rockefeller]."

A similar hope was expressed by Representative Edward Mezvinsky, Democrat of Iowa, who said he believed that the gifts disclosed thus far were only "the surface" of the total. Mr. Mezvinsky sent a telegram to Mr. Rockefeller last night, appealing for public disclosure of the details of financial gifts.

Influence Cited

Today, in a prepared statement, Mr. Mezvinsky said he was particularly concerned about the gift to Dr. Ronan, "especially considering the influence which some of my colleagues from New York advise me he wields as chairman of the port authority."

Dr. Ronan could not be reached for comment, but he did release a statement through John Tillman, public relations director for the Port Authority, that said:

"Dr. William J. Ronan confirms that he received a gift from Governor Nelson Rockefeller. The details about this gift, as given to the press by Mr. Hugh Morrow, are correct.

Any further details must come from Mr. Morrow."

Mr. Morrow said that the \$550,000 "gift" was made last spring, in what he said was the interval between Dr. Ronan's resignation as head of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, an \$85,000-a-year post, and his taking over the unsalaried chairmanship of the Port Authority. According to newspaper reports at the time, there was a one-day interval between the jobs.

'Year-End Bonus'

Mr. Morrow said that, with payment by Mr. Rockefeller of Federal and state gift taxes, the gift cost the former Governor about \$880,000. He described the gift as one that "could be related to the year-end bonus given to executives of large corporations."

The loans, Mr. Morrow said, had been in various amounts at various times during Dr. Ronan's association with Mr. Rockefeller. Mr. Morrow could not say how many separate loans there had been, how much each loan amounted to, or when they were made. Nor could he say whether these were interest-free loans, or whether Dr. Ronan had made any attempt to pay back any money borrowed from Mr. Rockefeller.

Asked whether these loans or any other made by Mr. Rockefeller amounted to augmenting individuals' salaries, Mr. Morrow noted that this was prohibited by state law in the case of state employees. There is a section of the state's code of ethics barring the solicitation or acceptance of a gift valued of more than \$25 if "it could reasonably be inferred" that the gift was made to influence the recipient "or was intended as a reward for any official action on his part."

Other Loans

Mr. Morrow said the former Governor had "loaned money to other people," including friends, but had "never made any gift when anyone was working for the state." He himself, he said, borrowed \$35,000 from Mr. Rockefeller in the early nineteen-sixties when he was a personal employe but was not on the state payroll. Mr. Rockefeller, he said, "canceled that debt" at Christmas "a couple of years later." In addition, Mr. Morrow disclosed yesterday that Mr. Rockefeller paid off \$100,000 in bank loans last spring that Mr. Morrow had made to meet heavy medical and other family expenses.

He also said that Mr. Rockefeller's staff and lawyers here

at work on supplying the information that Mr. Cannon requested.

The Ronan gift prompted Senator Jess A. Helms Committee's hearings. Mr. Helms, who testified at the hearings, submitted at that time a list of questions that he wanted Mr. Rockefeller to be asked, including questions concerning an alleged involvement of Mr. Rockefeller and Dr. Ronan with David Rockefeller in an undertaking "defrauding the bondholder of the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel regional public transpor-

tation agencies [into the Metropolitan Transportation Authority] in 1967."

Senator Helms added that the gift to Dr. Ronan made his questions "more urgent," and said the known gifts—which include \$50,000 to Henry A. Kissinger in 1969, when he left Mr. Rockefeller to join the Nixon Administration, and forgiveness of an \$86,000 debt owed by L. Johnson Norhouse, the former New York State Republican chairman, raised what Mr. Helms called "a grave question of propriety."