

Recipient Defends Gift From Rocky

New York

William J. Ronan said yesterday there was nothing "immoral or illegal" about his acceptance as a gift of \$550,000 he had originally borrowed from Nelson A. Rockefeller.

He also said that his net worth was more than enough to have paid back the loans and that "I always was ready" to do so.

The statements came amid reports that Rockefeller was upset and depressed about the developing controversy over his gifts to Ronan and other aides, and the potential effect of the disclosures of these gifts on his confirmation as vice president.

Ronan emphasized that the gift he had received from Rockefeller had been made during the two-week period last May when he was not on the state payroll.

His stress on this point was apparently intended to set at rest questions that the action might violate a state law forbidding a state official from accepting gifts worth \$25 or more.

The 62-year-old Ronan, now the unpaid chairman of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and a paid senior adviser to the Rockefeller families, acknowledged that the former governor was worried about the growing gift controversy.

While he sought to convey the impression that Rockefeller was mainly concerned



WILLIAM J. RONAN
He denied illegality

that the dispute would discourage able men from seeking high office, sources close to the former governor indicated that he was worried about being confirmed as vice president.

"I've never seen him so miserable and devastated," one person said.

The statements by Ronan were the first he has made publicly since news surfaced this week of the Rockefeller gifts not only to him, but also to many other former associates.

Ronan categorically denied any suggestion that there had been any understanding with Rockefeller that the \$550,000 in loans would eventually be translated into an outright gift.

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