

Election Unit to Extend Morton Investigation to Others

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 15 — The chairman of the Federal Election Commission said tonight that his agency would investigate the possibility that Presidential candidates in addition to President Ford were using Government employees as part of their campaign staffs.

The chairman, Thomas B. Curtis, said that the inquiry into the White House appointment of Rogers C. B. Morton as a political operative was "bound to" involve other candidates who are members of Congress, "because in anything like this, we try to operate across the board."

At issue is whether Mr. Morton's \$44,600 salary as a counselor to the President should be charged against Mr. Ford's primary campaign spending limit to the extent that the new White House adviser is involved in elective politics rather than the Government.

A scheduled confrontation between Philip W. Buchen, counsel to the President, and Mr. Curtis, failed to materialize today, because a commission meeting ran overtime and the chairman had to leave for St. Louis for business engagements.

Authority Restricted

The White House appeared prepared, however, to accept Mr. Curtis's interpretation of the new campaign law and report as political spending, subject to legal limits, any part of Mr. Morton's salary that was regarded as payment for purely political activities.

Mr. Curtis made it clear at a news conference after the commission meeting that the agency had no authority to prevent the President from putting Mr. Morton on the White House payroll and then using him principally for political coordination.

But the commission is going to make sure, he added, that all spending designed to influence the Presidential election will be properly reported and charged against the ceilings imposed on all candidates.

Several of the Democratic Presidential candidates are members of either the Senate or the House of Representatives, and some of them have used aides on their Congressional staffs more or less interchangeably with those in their campaign headquarters.

If the commission applies to these Democrats the Morton policy enunciated by its chairman, all or part of the salaries of any of their Congressional aides engaged in campaign work will also have to be

charged against the political spending limits.

The meeting between the White House representative and election commission officials was scheduled at Mr. Buchen's request after he read newspaper accounts of Mr. Curtis's comments yesterday on the legality of the Morton appointment.

The White House indicated earlier in the day that President Ford was prepared to take any steps with respect to his new political adviser that the commission said were required by the new campaign law.

John Carlson, deputy White House press secretary, said, "The President and his staff will totally and completely obey the letter and spirit of the law, just as we expect the other candidates to do."

Earlier in the day in Des Moines, however, Mr. Morton said that it would be up to the President and Mr. Buchen whether his \$44,600 White House salary would be charged against the Ford spending ceiling of \$10 million for the pre-convention campaign.

"I feel no immorality about being paid by the Federal Government for doing a job for the Federal Government," Mr. Morton told a news conference, emphasizing the governmental aspects of his new post.

"It would be a bad precedent for me to set—getting paid by a political fund-raising committee. The next thing you know, there could be a White House adviser who was on the payroll of the steel industry or the oil industry."

A Fresh Complaint

Mr. Morton was in Iowa to help to organize the Ford campaign in the precinct caucuses that will begin the delegate selection process next Monday. His expenses are being paid by the President Ford Committee.

Also spurring the commission's consideration of the issue was a complaint received this morning from one of the Democratic Presidential hopefuls, Fred R. Harris. He asked the commission to investigate "the mixed White House and political duties" of the former Secretary of Commerce.

A spokesman indicated that the question raised by Mr. Harris was probably not within the commission's jurisdiction, since it did not involve a violation of the campaign law, but he predicted that the commissioners would discuss it in closed session anyway.

Earlier today, the commission approved \$1.1 million more in Federal primary subsidies for six candidates, \$807,000 to Senator Henry M. Jackson, \$118,000 to President Ford, \$72,000

to Representative Morris K. Udall, \$54,000 to Jimmy Carter, \$30,000 to Terry Sanford and \$19,000 to Senator Lloyd M. Bentsen.

This increased to \$3.6 million the total amount of matching payments approved by the commission. Theoretically, with 13 candidates of both parties in the field, the total could reach \$65 million by convention time, but it will probably be much lower.

So far, eligible candidates have received these payment totals: Senator Birch Bayh, \$114,000; Senator Bentsen, \$511,000; Mr. Carter, \$385,000; President Ford, \$493,000; Mr. Harris, \$100,000; Senator Jackson, \$907,000; Ronald Reagan, \$100,000; Mr. Sanford, \$244,000; Sargent Shriver, \$100,000; Representative Udall, \$581,000, and Gov. George C. Wallace, \$100,000.