

WXPost
Clash on Morton Job Ebbs

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By William Chapman
Washington Post Staff Writer

The Federal Election Commission appeared to back off yesterday from its announced confrontation with the White House over Rogers C. B. Morton's new job as political handyman for President Ford.

It would be okay, said Commission Chairman Thomas B. Curtis, if Morton worked a full 40-hour week as Mr. Ford's adviser on domestic matters to earn his government salary and did his political work as a "volunteer."

Then his political dealings would come under the heading

of volunteer, off-hours work and wouldn't have to be counted under the new federal elections law.

That sort of split in Morton's duties was proposed to Curtis yesterday by White House Counsel Philip W. Buchen and Curtis promptly said it would overcome his objection that politics and official duties shouldn't be mixed in a White House aide's position.

"I would think that they (The White House) might even be leaning over backwards" if that sort of division of Morton's duties was promised, Curtis added.

The White House announced last week that Morton would

be named to a \$44,600 position as counselor to the President. His official duties would be as domestic and economic adviser to Mr. Ford, but he would also be the President's liaison to the President Ford Committee and the Republican National Committee.

After the announcement, Curtis suddenly embarrassed the White House by asserting that by paying a public salary to an aide involved in Mr. Ford's election campaign the President was wading into "dangerous waters."

Curtis said it would be a

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ROGERS C. B. MORTON
... a "volunteer" role

MORTON, From A1

"possible violation" of the new law unless Morton's political-time salary and travel expenses are reported as campaign expenses and included within the \$10 million spending ceiling on Mr. Ford's campaign.

Yesterday, Buchen emerged smiling from a closed-door meeting with Curtis at the commission's headquarters and explained a suggestion he had made. It was for Morton to work a 40-hour week in official capacities, advising the President on domestic concerns, and "volunteer" his extra hours as a political liaison man and speech-writer.

Buchen emphasized that no agreement was reached and that he planned to report back later on precisely how many hours each week Morton might be expected to spend on both types of work.

Buchen was asked if Morton would have to fill out a time card to prove each week that

he was abiding by the division of his labors.

Buchen doubted it. He said that policing of Morton's work hours would be voluntary and the burden of proving whether he kept to the schedule would be up to an outside challenger.

It was suggested that Morton might have to turn down phone calls from the President's campaign manager, Howard H. (Bo) Callaway, during his regular working hours. Buchen smiled and said he didn't think that would be necessary.

For his part, Curtis seemed delighted with the potential arrangement. Asked if Buchen's suggestion would constitute compliance with the federal election law, Curtis said, "Yes, I think it would be. I would think that they might even be leaning over backwards."

Meanwhile, the White House acknowledged that it had received between 30 and 40 checks, in connection with the controversy over Mr. Ford's veto of the common site picketing bill. All of the checks

were returned to the senders, according to White House press secretary Ron Nessen.

Most of the checks were received after Mr. Ford vetoed the bill and were accompanied by notes of thanks for overturning the legislation, Nessen said.

The issue had been raised by AFL-CIO President George Meany, who had favored the bill and who was angered at the veto. Meany claimed "it was a blatant attempt to purchase a veto" and said some of the checks were for \$1,000.

Nessen said none of them was for as much as \$1,000.