

Kleindienst Remarks Are Challenged

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The accuracy of statements by Attorney General-Designate Richard G. Kleindienst and former Attorney General John N. Mitchell were challenged yesterday in the burgeoning controversy over the Justice Department's handling of three antitrust suits against the International Telephone and Telegraph Co.

Both officials had insisted that they knew nothing about a pledge by an ITT subsidiary to contribute to the 1972 Republican National Convention until long after the government had abandoned its prosecution of the suits last July.

Yesterday, Senator Edward M. Kennedy (Dem-Mass.) challenged Kleindienst's assertion in a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing, and syndicated columnist Jack Anderson charged that Mitchell had discussed the company's pledge with two California officials last May.

Neither allegation suggested that either official was implicated in an improper deal, but the assertions that they had misled the public about their knowledge of ITT's support for the Republican convention served to broaden the dispute over the antitrust settlement.

It became apparent that the Senate Judiciary Committee's hearings would extend through much of next week, and perhaps beyond — and that senate confirmation of Kleindienst's nomina-

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tion to become Attorney General would remain snagged until the hearings ended.

Democratic senators lavished compliments upon Kleindienst for requesting the hearing to deny the accusations, while Republican leaders implied that the hearings had gotten out of control.

Senate Minority Leader Hugh Scott (Rep-Pa.) protested that the hearings were becoming a "broad fishing expedition" into the Nixon administration's handling of antitrust cases.

Senator James O. Eastland (Dem-Miss.) added color to the proceedings by disclosing that when the hearings resume on Tuesday morning three "mystery witnesses" will testify.

SEARCHING

He also passed along a report that some 20 FBI agents are searching for Dita D. Beard, the ITT's missing Washington lobbyist. The committee has been trying to subpoena her to testify about her purported memorandum to her superior, linking ITT's contribution to the upcoming Republican convention in San Diego with the settlement of the antitrust suits.

Eastland said he has heard that the FBI search for Mrs. Beard has extended to Colorado, West Virginia and Montana.

ITT issued a statement here yesterday contradicting reports that its officials had told Mrs. Beard to get out of town. The statement said she had promised to keep the company advised of her whereabouts so she would be available for testimony, and it asserted that she could help to allay the charges about the company.

It added that the contribution by ITT's subsidiary, the Sheraton Corp. of America, was "in no sense a political payment," but only a means to attracting business to the

new Sheraton hotel in San Diego. The amount contributed was \$100,000, with a possible additional \$100,000 to be paid on a matching basis, the statement said.

Other reports — including the memorandum attributed to Mrs. Beard — had mentioned a \$400,000 pledge in cash and services.

In yesterday's two-hour hearing, testimony was taken only from the same three witnesses who testified Thursday — Kleindienst, former Justice Department antitrust chief Richard M. McLaren, and Felix G. Rohatyn, a director of ITT who helped persuade the Justice Department to settle the antitrust cases without insisting upon divestiture of all three subsidiaries at issue.

Kleindienst repeated his statement that he knew nothing of ITT's contribution to the San Diego convention until he read about it in the press late last November or early December. McLaren also said he learned about it in the press.

Kennedy then produced a letter to Kleindienst dated September 22, in which Reuben B. Robertson 3D, and associate of consumer advocate Ralph Nader, had asked about rumors of a link between settlement of the suits and "ITT's reported financial support to the City of San Diego" as site of the Republican convention. The letter also asked if Kleindienst had discussed the contribution with Representative Bob Wilson of California.

ADVISED

The Senator also produced a reply, signed by McLaren, saying "I am advised" that Kleindienst had no contact with Representative Wilson at that time, and that there was no connection between the San Diego contribution and the settlement.

Both Kleindienst and McLaren said that they did not recall these letters when they testified that they did not learn of the convention payment until late in 1971.

Mitchell said Wednesday, in his final official press conference as Attorney General, that he "did not know as of that time, and still don't know what arrangements the Republican Party had with San Diego or anyone else." In a statement issued by his office on February 28, he said he "had no knowledge of anyone on the committee or elsewhere dealing with International Telephone and Telegraph," and that "I do not know as of this date" about the arrangements.

Mitchell and Anderson had been scheduled to testify yesterday, but both appearances were postponed until next week.