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Rep. Wilson, on TV, Told of I.T.T. Pledge on Convention Funds

By ANTHONY RILEY
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SAN DIEGO, April 9—Details of talks that took place last year between an influential Republican and high officials of the International Telephone and Telegraph Corporation have been disclosed in a television interview here.

In the interview, Representative Bob Wilson, Republican of California, spoke of his long-time friendship with Harold S. Geneen, I.T.T. president, and of a reported \$400,000 pledge by an I.T.T. subsidiary to support the Republican National Convention. But Mr. Wilson emphasized that he knew nothing of the settlement of an antitrust case against the company at the time the pledge was made.

The interview was conducted by Harold Keen of KFRB-TV. It was filmed and broadcast March 3 and has been rebroadcast twice.

Mr. Wilson has become one of the central figures in the investigation by a special subcommittee of the Senate Judiciary Committee that is looking into charges, first made by Jack Anderson, the columnist, that the Republican-run Justice Department gave favorable treatment to I.T.T. in return for a

\$400,000 contribution to help finance the Republican National Convention in San Diego.

Mr. Wilson is due to testify tomorrow when the committee resumes its hearings.

In the television interview, Mr. Wilson said he had dinner with Mr. Geneen on May 12, 1971, in San Diego's Half Moon Inn, the night before I.T.T. held a meeting of its board of directors at the hotel. The hotel is owned by a subsidiary of the huge conglomerate, the Sheraton Corporation.

Mr. Wilson said he met in the morning with Robert H. Finch, counselor to the President. He said that the substance of Mr. Finch's conversation was that "it's a shame San Diego couldn't compete for the convention and if we could raise \$800,000 in cash we had a good chance to get it."

Mr. Wilson continued: "So I just happened to be having dinner with Harold Geneen and [Howard P.] Bud James, who is president of the Sheraton Corporation, at their annual meeting over at the Half Moon Inn that evening." The televised conversation then went like this:

Mr. Keen: "Geneen is the president of I.T.T.?"
Mr. Wilson: "Geneen is the

friend of mine—been fishing with him here many times—and I said, 'It's a shame we can't get the convention. If we could raise \$800,000 we could do it.'"

"And he said, 'It would be a good thing for our hotels because we are building a new hotel.' And he said it would be a good promotional and would help put San Diego on the map as a convention city and I agreed."

"And he said, 'I'll tell you what I will do. If you will take the commitment for half of the money—let someone else raise the other half—I'll back you up to the extent of \$400,000, providing you go out and get local people to put up their money.'"

"That's the thing of it. In other words, a guarantee. So that sounded like a fair enough offer and I announced that local interests had pledged a guarantee of \$400,000 and it went from there."

Mr. Keen: "Was there a written agreement?"
Mr. Wilson: "No. It wasn't even a handshake. He is a man of honor and a man I have known for years and there was no question about his following through. There was nothing

Mr. Wilson said he had no knowledge of the suit. He also said that, despite the guarantee of \$400,000 he believed that the corporation's contribution might actually be just "a little over" \$100,000.

Mr. Wilson is a quiet but influential member of the House. He has headed the Republican Congressional Campaign Committee for the last 10 years. He was thrust into the center of the controversy after publication of the contents of a 45-minute taped interview he held March 3 with The San Diego Union.

In that interview, Mr. Wilson spoke of officials in the Washington office of I.T.T. pressuring one of their lobbyists, Mrs. Dita Davis Beard, to write a memorandum describing the \$400,000 arrangement.

Mrs. Beard, who is recovering from a heart ailment in an apartment in Denver, concedes that she wrote such a memo but maintains that someone altered it an added sentences to link the corporation

pledge with the antitrust settlement.

In the interview with The San Diego Union, Mr. Wilson spoke of how the Sheraton Corporation first purchased the Half Moon Inn.

"I remembered, of course, he [Mr. Geneen] bought it with a phone call from my office in Washington."

"I said, 'Look, if you're interested—your office—in getting a lease on that new location on Harbor Island, why don't you buy the Half Moon Inn? You can get it for three and a half million bucks, which is a steal, and it's a 99 per cent occupancy hotel.'"

"And I showed him a folder and a newspaper clipping from The [San Diego] Tribune which said, 'I just visited what must be the most beautiful hotel-motel in the world.'"

"So he picked up the phone and he told the president of Sheraton, 'Buy it.'"

"And they bought it."

"He said, 'This has been the best buy Sheraton ever made in a hotel.'"

Mr. Wilson is listed as a non-paid vice president of The Tolle Company, a San Diego advertising agency that handles I.T.T.'s accounts for its hotels.