

EX-OIL AIDE BALKS ON ELECTION GIFTS

Invokes Fifth Amendment
Rather Than Testify on
Industry Contributions

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 21—

A former oil company official who had been expected to tell Watergate investigators about political contributions by the petroleum industry has invoked the Fifth Amendment's protection against possible self-incrimination rather than testify.

The Senate Watergate staff attempted yesterday to question W. W. Keeler, former board chairman of the Phillips Petroleum Company, who is said to have served as coordinator for the industry's political contributions in 1972.

However, both Mr. Keeler and another Phillips executive, Carstens Slack, who heads the company's Washington office, refused to testify.

David M. Dorsen, assistant chief counsel to the Watergate committee, said that the questions the two officials had refused to answer had covered not only illegal contributions by Phillips, which had been previously disclosed, but also the possibility of additional money generated elsewhere in the petroleum industry.

Evidence Is Sought

Because a large number of major oil companies have not appeared on key lists of campaign contributions, investigators have been looking for evidence of additional illegal contributions.

Earlier this year, Phillips and two other petroleum companies—Gulf Oil and Ashland Oil—admitted making illegal contributions of \$100,000 each to President Nixon's re-election campaign.

In addition, other contributions, most of them apparently given legally by individuals rather than from corporate funds, have been reported by a number of small and medium-sized oil companies.

Lawyers at Common Cause, the citizens' lobby group, have said that many other big oil companies that might have been expected to donate did not appear on either the public reports filed with the General Accounting Office or on a secret list of cash contributors that was released in September by the Finance Committee to Re-elect the President following a court order.

Thomas D. Finney of the law firm of Clifford, Warneke, Glass, McIlwain & Finney, attorney for the Phillips officials, said that his clients had invoked the Fifth Amendment because "possible criminal charges were not yet resolved" by the Watergate special prosecutor's office.

Only One Not Charged

Of seven companies that have admitted to the special prosecutor's office that they made illegal campaign contributions, Phillips is the only one that has not been charged in court for its admitted violations.

Both Gulf and Ashland were fined on Nov. 13 after they had filed guilty pleas to having made illegal campaign contributions to the President's re-election campaign.

Gulf also pleaded guilty to having given smaller illegal gifts of \$15,000 to Representative Wilbur D. Mills of Arkansas and \$10,000 to Senator Henry M. Jackson of Washington, both of whom were unsuccessful candidates for the Democratic Presidential nomination last year.

Gulf was fined \$5,000, and Claude C. Wild Jr., its chief Washington representative, was fined \$1,000. Ashland was also fined \$5,000, and its board chairman, Orin E. Atkins, was fined \$1,000. No jail sentences were imposed.

A Large Contributor

The oil industry has customarily been a large contributor to political campaigns, both locally and nationally.

It has had close ties with politicians. The industry has often been criticized because of generous oil depletion tax allowances and other favorable government regulations and rulings but has generally prevailed in showdowns over such matters.

Moreover, large cash contributions are nothing new to the oil industry. More than a decade ago, W. Alton Jones, the chairman of the executive committee of the Cities Service Company, was killed in an airline crash and was found to be carrying \$55,690 in cash and \$7,000 in travelers checks.

A company spokesman said at the time that Mr. Jones often carried large amounts of money, because "if he passed an art shop and a painting caught his eye, he would go in and buy it no matter what it cost."

However, enforcement officials have said that at least part of the money that Mr. Jones was carrying may have been earmarked for political contributions.