

Mr. Nixon's 'Mogul of Ambassadors'

Unpublished evidence collected by the impeachment investigation shows that Peter Flanigan, nominated by President Ford as ambassador to Spain, was President Nixon's "mogul of ambassadors" intimately involved in finding plush diplomatic posts for generous Republican campaign contributors.

Secret White House correspondence and confidential interviews of Nixon aides by impeachment investigators partially contradict Flanigan's sworn testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee; he testified Oct. 2 at the one-day hearing on his nomination that he was not involved in brokering political ambassadorships. The conflicting evidence has since been given the Senate committee, causing even some Republican senators supporting Flanigan privately to question Mr. Ford's decision to resubmit the nomination to Congress.

Moreover, contrary to Flanigan's claims that he was cleared by the Watergate Special Prosecutor, he is under active investigation on several fronts. That Mr. Ford is intent on adding a nasty Senate confirmation fight to his heavy burden suggests inadequacies in decision-making that transcend Peter Flanigan.

The most serious charge raised Oct. 2 stemmed from testimony to the House impeachment inquiry by former Nixon attorney Herbert Kalmbach. He was told by Flanigan in 1971, Kalmbach testified, to solicit a \$250,000 contribution from Dr. Ruth Farkas who in turn would be named ambassador to Costa Rica (actually, she became ambassador to Luxembourg).

Flanigan denied this. What's more, he told the committee, he repudiated Kalmbach's commitments of European ambassadorial appointments for two other fatcats, J. Fife Symington and Vincent de Roulet. Flanigan swore he

told H.R. Haldeman, White House chief of staff, "that this was contrary to the practice and policy of the White House" and that Symington and de Roulet should be offered their money back.

The Senate committee did not then have contradictory material collected by the House Judiciary Committee, including staff interviews with Kalmbach that were never followed up in the impeachment hearings.

Kalmbach told investigators that, in May or June of 1969, Nixon fundraiser Maurice Stans gave Flanigan a list of contributors to consider as ambassadors. On June 20, 1969, Flanigan met with Symington, a retired millionaire Maryland socialite, to inform him he was being considered as ambassador to Costa Rica or Trinidad. According to Kalmbach, Symington said he wanted a "challenging" post; Flanigan replied Trinidad was a challenge. Set for Trinidad, Symington wrote Flanigan a thank-you letter July 24.

Symington soon tired of Trinidad and asked Kalmbach for a European post (first choice: Spain), promising additional contributions of \$100,000. He met with Flanigan in June 1970, writing him afterward he felt "very encouraged that I have your interest and understanding concerning the future."

Flanigan did block a European post for Symington ("a personality thing," Kalmbach testified). But the new evidence scarcely shows him a disinterested party. Flanigan met with Symington on July 9 and July 13, 1971. Finally, on Sept. 4, he offered to return Symington's contribution and was turned down.

That did not end it. "I trust . . . that you and Peter (Flanigan) are working things out," Haldeman wrote Symington Oct. 26, 1971. Symington replied Nov. 13 that "I feel sure that Peter will work things out in accordance with Herb's (Kalmbach) commitment

to me." Haldeman's reply of Nov. 19: "Peter Flanigan reports that you had a pleasant and frank meeting on Oct. 12."

Nor does the new evidence show Flanigan blocking de Roulet, a young New York millionaire credited with Republican contributions of \$44,500 in 1968 and \$103,500 in 1972. Becoming ambassador to Jamaica in 1969, de Roulet was named persona non grata by the Jamaican government in 1973 but wanted a European post (first choices: Italy and Spain).

A memo to Haldeman Sept. 24, 1971, from aide Gordon Strachan quotes Kalmbach as saying Flanigan felt Europe impossible for de Roulet but that Mexico or Malta might be "doable." In fact nothing was "doable" after Jamaica.

Flanigan's role was adroitly summed up to House investigators by Alexander Butterfield, a former White House aide: "Flanigan was the mogul of ambassadors."

"The White House needed someone who had contacts with wealthy individuals," said Butterfield, adding that Flanigan "can talk to the Annenbergs (Walter Annenberg, publishing tycoon named ambassador to Britain since 1969) and the Dudley Swims (the late chairman of National Airlines, designated for an ambassadorial plum but never nominated) and convince them they should become ambassadors."

Since the Foreign Relations Committee staff will surely recommend full hearings on Flanigan, the bad old days in the Nixon White House will be exposed again to public view if the President persists in this nomination. That's why influential Republican senators privately urge Ford to end his blind and costly loyalty to Nixon men who escaped direct contamination by Watergate.