

# Annenberg Letter Attributed to Colson

By Marilyn Berger

Washington Post Staff Writer

Charles W. Colson has been identified as the man who thought up, printed and sent out a letter in praise of President Nixon on official State Department stationery signed by the U.S. Ambassador to London, Walter Annenberg.

Colson, who resigned in March as White House special counsel, was identified in a letter released yesterday from the State Department to Sen. J. Fulbright (D-Ark.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

A similar letter was sent to Sen. Thomas F. Eagleton (D-Mo.), who had first raised the issue of political activity by a U.S. ambassador who he said was supposed to represent our country in a non-partisan capacity.

In the letters, Marshall Wright, acting assistant secretary for congressional relations, said: "We have learned from Ambassador Annenberg that the initiative for his letter came from Mr. Charles Colson, at that time a member of the White House staff. Ambassador Annenberg further informs us that he signed one copy

of the letter in question, and gave it to Mr. Colson. He assumes that Mr. Colson subsequently reproduced the letter and arranged for its distribution. The original letter was on official Department of State stationery."

The Wright letters, dated April 30, continued: "Ambassador Annenberg has informed us that he does not know to whom the letters and enclosed editorials were sent, nor does he know at whose expense the letters were mailed."

The Annenberg letter of Feb. 5, 1973, was addressed "Dear Sir," containing a mass mailing, and contained enclosures of two reprints

from British newspapers. They were critical of "trends," "leftwingers," and of the Kennedy administration and praised what Annenberg called Mr. Nixon's "strong but quiet leadership" and "solid achievement."

When Eagleton first raised the issue with the State Department he received a letter from Wright dated April 6, in which the department said: "Ambassador Annenberg has indicated he decided to send this letter to U. S. citizens either known to him or suggested by his friends to call attention to support in the United Kingdom for the President's policies. His pur-

pose was to show that there is intelligent and articulate support for these policies in important sections of the British press."

That letter continued: "We do not believe that Ambassador Annenberg's correspondence constitutes a partisan political activity. On the contrary the ambassador was concerned with calling attention to support received from policies of the U. S. government. It is not inappropriate for an ambassador to engage in such correspondence."

Eagleton, a member of the State Department appropriations subcommittee, replied that he considered the re-sponse "inadequate." He

said in a letter of April 23 that he "would hope that the information I requested can be obtained from the department without resorting to a congressional investigation of the matter."

The letter received by Eagleton completely turned the State Department's position around. "Let me express my genuine regret," wrote Wright, "that my earlier letter to you of April 6th, which was based on information relayed to the department from London and on a statement which Ambassador Annenberg released in London, was neither as complete nor as accurate as it should have been."