

Favorite of Nixon Is Under Fire

By Jack Anderson

One of President Nixon's favorite labor leaders, who has been inducted into the Republican holy of holies, is under double-barreled federal investigation.

Both the Justice and Labor Departments are looking into the doings of Kenneth T. Lyons, a tough and talkative union boss now serving as national vice chairman of Democrats for Nixon. Justice is studying whether he committed perjury in a Mafia-related case, and Labor is investigating charges that he misused union funds.

Lyons heads not only the 100,000-strong National Association of Government Employees but, embarrassingly for him in the present circumstances, the 30,000-member International Brotherhood of Police Officers.

But while government gumshoes have been checking on Lyons, President Nixon has been courting him. The President has appointed him to the prestigious White House higher education advisory council and has invited him to at least two White House affairs.

As an officer of Democrats for Nixon, Lyons also attended the exclusive Texas barbecue which ex-Treasury Secretary John Connally threw for Mr. Nixon. But Lyons' entree to

the councils of the mighty hasn't deterred the federal sleuths.

His trouble with the Justice Department began last June with Senate testimony about a detergent called Poly-Clean. The product, according to the Senate testimony, is likened to a Mafia family with a record for strong-arm business tactics.

Incriminating Vouchers

The detergent's maker, David Weiner of Palmer, Mass., was called on the witness stand. His testimony and vouchers he produced showed that, at Lyons' request, he made four trips to Boston to discuss Poly-Clean. One of their lunch and dinner companions, the vouchers show, was Tony Camerota. He is a nephew of the late Nick Camerota, who was the Mafia godfather for Western Massachusetts until his recent demise.

Finally, the vouchers tell of an agreement between Weiner and Lyons for distributing Poly-Clean through a company called "Noreast Sales Corporation." Talks about the deal lasted for hours, the vouchers attest.

After Weiner's damning statements, Lyons demanded to testify before the committee. He appeared without a lawyer to deny all the allegations. He swore he didn't know

Camerota, had never heard of Noreast Sales Corporation and couldn't recall Weiner's "ever buying me a cup of coffee."

Lyons also testified that he had met with Weiner twice, not four times, that Weiner had tried to get him to push Poly-Clean, but that he had rejected the deal.

The Senate record was so shot with contradictions that it was referred to the Justice Department for possible perjury prosecutions. Within the last few days, the Senate has also sent Justice an article from the Boston Globe identifying two new prospective witnesses in the case.

As for the probe into Lyons' alleged misuse of union funds, the charges were brought by union dissidents. The Labor Department will confirm only that the investigation deals with "financial affairs."

We reached Lyons in Boston for his comments. He talked at length without notes, repeating the same detailed denial he had given under oath to the senators. "The thing is so unreal," he said of the Poly-Clean case. "It comes as a complete mystery to me." On the alleged misuse of funds, he was "confident" he would be cleared.

Weiner, in an earlier talk with my associate Les Whitten, said he ran a clean company with no Mafia ties. He

also struck to his Senate testimony.

It may take the courts to resolve the conflicting stories.

Looking to 1976

A number of Democratic hopefuls, anticipating George McGovern's defeat next week, are already jockeying for positions in the 1976 presidential sweepstakes.

They include three of the Senate's most able and articulate members—Indiana's Birch Bayh, Idaho's Frank Church and Minnesota's Walter Mondale. All three have told friends, however, that they will step aside if Senator Ted Kennedy seeks the nomination.

McGovern is also expected to make a second bid if he isn't too badly mauled by the voters on Nov. 7. But he might have trouble simply keeping his Senate seat, since he must come up for re-election in 1974 in conservative South Dakota.

McGovern's two vice presidential choices, Tom Eagleton and Sargent Shriver, are also making presidential noises in private. But Eagleton wouldn't likely challenge Kennedy, and certainly Shriver will give his eminent brother-in-law first crack at the nomination.

The big question mark is whether Kennedy will run. He has told intimates that he's definitely interested but hasn't made up his mind.