

Nixon's Responsibility...

Every President has to be mindful of his responsibilities as leader of his party. Until the financing of national politics is placed on a more rational, disciplined basis, one of those responsibilities inevitably includes the raising of campaign funds.

But no Chief Executive in recent memory has sanctioned in his behalf so cynical an approach to fundraising as has President Nixon in this campaign. According to a report in this newspaper, Maurice H. Stans, the former Secretary of Commerce and now Mr. Nixon's chief fund-raiser, has been urging big contributors to make large, anonymous donations before April 7 when the new Federal Election Campaign Act goes into effect.

Until that date, the old useless law is controlling. It permits dummy committees in the District of Columbia to evade filing any report of the contributions which they receive. Under Mr. Stans's guidance, the Republicans have apparently set up about fifty of these committees.

After April 7, the new law will require every political committee to report publicly each gift of more than \$100 with the donor's name, occupation and address. For several weeks, Mr. Stans has been touring the country to hold unannounced meetings with wealthy Republicans and encourage them to give now so as to keep secret their names and the size of their donations.

In California, one of Mr. Nixon's chief money raisers has sent out an extraordinarily revealing letter, which urges donors to beat the April 7 deadline and avoid public disclosure "which we all naturally want to avoid."

When he signed the new campaign financing law last month, President Nixon said he was pleased because providing all the facts to the public "will guard against campaign abuses and will work to build public confidence in the integrity of the electoral process."

President Nixon cannot adopt this admirable stance in public and permit Mr. Stans to do just the opposite in private. The charges of high-level fixing in the I. T. T. case have already shaken public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the Justice Department while presided over by Mr. Nixon's campaign manager, John Mitchell. The manipulations of White House aide Peter Flanigan on behalf of politically well-connected businessmen likewise cause concern. For the President to permit Mr. Stans to raise a huge political fund anonymously from wealthy businessmen can only compound public uneasiness.

Mr. Stans can refuse to see reporters. Mr. Flanigan can avoid testifying to Congressional investigators by taking refuge in executive privilege. But they are only agents. The ultimate responsibility lies with Mr. Nixon. All but one of the major Democratic Presidential candidates have voluntarily disclosed the facts about their campaign finances. Mr. Nixon has no honorable alternative but to direct Mr. Stans to follow their example.