

# Innocent Plea in Illegal Funds Case

Cleveland, Ohio

American Ship Building Co. of Lorain and its board chairman, George M. Steinbrenner III, pleaded innocent yesterday in federal court to charges of contributing illegally to political campaigns.

Steinbrenner, 43, — a principal partner in the New York Yankee baseball team — and the firm were indicted by a federal grand jury which also charged the executive with conspiracy, obstruction of justice and obstruction of criminal investigation.

He was arraigned before

U.S. magistrate Herbert Maher, then released on personal recognizance.

U.S. District Judge Leroy J. Contie Jr. set May 22 for a pre-trial conference to discuss motions, a trial date and other facets of the proceedings.

A day earlier, AmShip executive vice president John H. Melcher Jr., who also is the company's general counsel, pleaded guilty to helping cover up an illegal \$25,000 contribution the government contends Steinbrenner made from company funds in April 1972 to President Nix-

on's re-election committee.

A federal attorney said Melcher would cooperate with prosecutors in the Steinbrenner case.

*Associated Press*