



ELMER H. BOBST
Nixon friend

Cash Offer For Influence In FTC Case

By Bob Woodward
and Carl Bernstein
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Business executive Elmer H. Bobst, the man President Nixon often has called his "honorary father," wrote to then-Attorney General John N. Mitchell in 1971 that an unidentified friend "would come up with \$100,000" for the election campaign in exchange for help in a case pending before the Federal Trade Commission.

The proposal is contained in a six-paragraph letter Bobst wrote to Mitchell on Oct. 13, 1971.

In the letter, a copy of which has been obtained by the Washington Post, Bobst complained to Mitchell about the "situation" at the FTC, which still is challenging a merger between two drug manufacturers, the Warner-Lambert Pharmaceutical Co. and Parke, Davis Inc.

Bobst, 89, is Warner-Lambert's biggest stockholder and honorary chairman of its board.

The letter, however, does not make clear if the "situation" refers to the Warner-Lambert merger or some other unspecified matter pending before the FTC at that time. FTC officials said yesterday they were not aware of any pressure by either Bobst or Mitchell in the Warner-Lambert case.

Three legal experts on criminal law said that the Bobst letter, if authentic, was sufficient evidence itself—whether or not \$100,000 was contributed or any pressure was put on the FTC—to warrant an investigation into attempted bribery and other related violations of the law.

Failure to inform legal authorities of receipt of such a letter, some of the same experts said, could warrant investigation into possible misprision (concealment) of a felony.

Checks with several federal investigative agencies yesterday, including the office of the special Watergate prosecutor, indicated they knew nothing of the letter.

Bobst, who has been a close associate of Mr. Nixon for many years, could not be reached for comment yesterday. Herbert Bergson, a Washington lawyer for Warner-Lambert, said yesterday that "the company knows nothing about this . . . whatever Mr. Bobst may have tried to do he was thoroughly unsuccessful."

William G. Hundley, an attorney for former Attorney General Mitchell, said yesterday that he had no knowledge of the letter.