

SEC Begins Probe of Trips By Government Officials

Washington

The Securities and Exchange Commission is investigating the U.S. Steel Corp.'s entertainment of government officials, including President Ford, at company-owned facilities, a corporation spokesman said yesterday.

The spokesman confirmed that the SEC was conducting its probe after the White House declined comment on reports detailing Mr. Ford's trips with a company lobbyist to the Caribbean, a company-owned house in Florida and a corporation lodge in New Jersey.

Carl Atkinson, the U.S. Steel spokesman, said the firm began discussing its entertainment policies with SEC officials at the beginning of this week.

Atkinson declined to say how broad the SEC investigation is or whether SEC attorneys intend to ask the company to disclose the names of all government officials who have been guests of the company at the New Jersey lodge or Florida house.

The lobbyist, William Whyte, noted in a statement that he and Mr. Ford "have been close personal friends for more than 20 years. To my direct knowledge, Congressman Ford shared the use of U.S. Steel overnight accommodations, as my personal guest, on five occasions over the last dozen years or so."

The overnight accommodations were provided Mr. Ford at a steel company house near Disney World in Florida in 1972 and 1973, and at a company lodge in New Jersey for golf outings in 1964, 1969 and 1973.

A company spokesman said he had no knowledge that U.S. Steel paid any

travel expenses for Mr. Ford. But he said the firm paid for Mr. Ford's lodging in all five instances.

Referring to the Caribbean trips, Whyte said in a statement:

"Speaking of these vacations together, I recall four such trips to the Caribbean during the last 15 years — twice to Rock Sound, Eleuthera in the Bahamas, where we were the guests of Mr. and Mrs. Perkins McGuire, and twice to the Tryall Club in Jamaica, where we rented a home with two other couples and all shared the expense. On all four trips we flew in commercial aircraft and Mr. Ford personally paid for his tickets."

A company spokesman said the other guests who shared the expenses of renting the Jamaican house were Representative and Mrs. John Jarman (Dem.-Okla.) and Rod Markley, a Ford Motor Co. lobbyist, and his wife.

McGuire, the host in the Bahamas, was an assistant secretary of defense in 1959-1960 and served during the Nixon administration on the Commission on Government Procurement.

Earlier this week, in response to reports about the golf outings, the White House said there was "no evidence of wrongdoing."

It also was disclosed that Whyte's 24-year-old son, Roger, has been employed for more than two years as an advance man on Vice President Nelson Rockefeller's staff.

A Rockefeller spokesman said the younger Whyte was hired "strictly on his own merits" at between \$15,000 and \$16,000 a year.

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