

POST FOR MORTON DRAWS CRITICISM

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Strauss and Election Aide

View It as Political

NYTimes

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 14—The Democratic national chairman and the chairman of the Federal Election Commission, a Republican, today criticized what they said was the attempt by the White House to designate the Cabinet-level appointment of Rogers C. B. Morton as a governmental assignment rather than a political one.

Thomas B. Curtis, the commission chairman, said the agency "will have to count" at least a portion of Mr. Morton's salary as counselor to the President within the primary campaign ceiling imposed on Mr. Ford as a candidate.

Robert S. Strauss, the Democratic chairman, called it "disgraceful, shameful" for the Administration to attempt to disguise what he said was Mr. Morton's role as a political operative and put him on the nonpolitical payroll.

Mr. Strauss said that Democratic attorneys were studying the possibility of filing a complaint with the Federal Election Commission, on the ground that trying to separate Mr. Morton from the President's re-election campaign was "contrary to the spirit and intent" of the new campaign law.

Under that law, the salaries of all employees of the President Ford Committee and White House aides on political assignment are chargeable against the \$10 million spending limit imposed on each Presidential candidate for the pre-convention period.

When the White House yesterday announced the appointment of Mr. Morton, the departing Secretary of Commerce, as counselor to the President, a spokesman said he would have only "incidental" political responsibilities in his new \$44,600 post.

'Bumbling and Fumbling'

The White House press secretary, Ron Nessen, said that Mr. Morton would be a Cabinet-rank adviser on economic and domestic matters.

Mr. Morton said he would not use the word "incidental" to describe his political contacts. His political activity, he said, would "take no overwhelming, major part" of his time.

Mr. Strauss estimated that classifying Mr. Morton as a governmental adviser would enable the Ford campaign to spend about \$22,000 more within its campaign limits. He called the confusion over the Morton assignment an example of "bumbling and fumbling" by the Administration.

Mr. Curtis said that failure to report at least part of Mr. Morton's salary as a campaign expenditure, subject to statutory limits, would constitute evasion of the new campaign law.

"They'd better rethink this thing," he said.

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