

Committee Calls Kleindienst Clean

WASHINGTON — (AP) — A majority of the Senate Judiciary Committee, in a report urging confirmation of Richard Kleindienst's nomination as attorney general, today rejected accusations of a political deal in the settlement of antitrust cases against International Telephone and Telegraph Corp.

"Based on the evidence, it is the conclusion of the committee that the settlement was reached on the merits

after arm's-length negotiations between representatives of ITT and the Justice Department's antitrust division," the majority report says.

"Those negotiations and the settlement of the ITT cases were not the product of political influence or promise of political favor from ITT," it adds.

Investigation

The committee conducted an extensive investigation

after columnist Jack Anderson published a memo purportedly written by ITT lobbyist Dita Beard.

It linked the out-of-court settlement to a pledge by the huge conglomerate's Sheraton Hotel subsidiary to help underwrite the expenses of the 1972 Republican National Convention.

Previously the committee had unanimously approved Kleindienst's nomination, but it reopened its hearings at his request.

In a report to be filed tomorrow in the Senate, the committee concludes that Kleindienst, who was deputy attorney general at the time, "acted properly in the conduct of his office in the matter of the settlement of these cases."

Reaffirmation

The committee voted 11 to 4 on April 27, after its second round of hearings, to reaffirm its original recommendation that the Senate confirm Kleindienst's nomination to succeed John Mitchell.

A minority report is to be filed by Senators who dissented from the committee's recommendation.

The majority, besides finding no evidence to support the charge of a political deal in the settlement of the antitrust cases against ITT, also concludes:

- That Kleindienst did not mislead the committee about his contacts with White House aide Peter M. Flanigan on the ITT case.

- That there was nothing improper or irregular about the way in which a financial analysis was obtained from a Wall Street investment banker, Richard J. Ramsden, on the effects of a forced divestiture of Hartford Fire Insurance Co. by ITT.

That Kleindienst's handling of an investigation of U.S. Attorney Harry Steward in San Diego was in line with findings of the Justice Department's Criminal Division.

Kleindienst's nomination

is expected to be taken up in the Senate late next week or the first of the following week. Opponents say they plan extended debate but not a filibuster.

The committee's majority

said that in its eight weeks of hearings "sensational charges . . . frequently blurred the only issue before the committee" — Kleindienst's fitness to serve as attorney general.