

Nixon's China Envoy Drunk?

WASHINGTON — (UPI) — Columnist Jack Anderson said today that Ambassador Arthur K. Watson, designated to handle diplomatic contacts with the Chinese in Paris, "got gloriously drunk" on the airline flight that took him to Washington for conferences with President Nixon.

"A number of witnesses have told us the slim, gray-haired ambassador, normally the picture of dignity, kept shouting for more Scotch, grabbing the stewardesses and trying to stuff money down the fronts of their blouses," Anderson wrote in his column.

In Paris Watson had no comment on the article according to an embassy spokesman.

Anderson said witnesses told him that Watson, who was president of International Business Machines before being appointed ambassador to France by Nixon, "finally passed out."

"They say he appeared to be foaming at the mouth from white tablets he had been chewing," Anderson wrote.

State Department spokesman Charles Bray said today that the department "has confidence in Ambassador Watson" and that he "will continue to carry out his ambassador functions and other functions, including dealing with the Chinese, that the President has charged him with."

Bray declined to say whether an inquiry is being made into the facts of the case or to say whether the State Department has jurisdiction over the competency of politically appointed ambassadors.

Anderson said the incident raised the possibility that Watson "could jeopardize the Chinese - American detente and undo the good President Nixon accomplished in Peking."

"In Chinese eyes, drunken behavior is considered disgraceful," the columnist



ARTHUR WATSON
"High" over Atlantic?
—AP Photo

wrote. "The Chinese love good liquor and even play drinking games. But the man who gets drunk loses the game and brings shame upon himself."

Watson held his first meeting in Paris this week with Chinese Ambassador Huang Chen. They have been assigned to negotiate details of cultural and trade exchanges agreed to in principle during Nixon's trip to China.

Anderson said he had discussed "Watson's liquor problem with a variety of sources."

"Insiders say this figured in his departure from International Business Machines, the corporate giant his late father built," Anderson wrote.

In New York, an IBM spokesman said, "We don't know anything about it."

Anderson said the chief stewardess of the Pan American World Airways flight from London to Washington March 9 filed a complaint about Watson's conduct.

The columnist said, however, that Pan Am "hushed up the report and ordered the flight crew not to discuss the incident."

Anderson said the witnesses agreed "that Watson was drunk" when he boarded the flight in London.