

DEC 17 1972

NYTimes

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Executive Reports

150 Secret Groups For Gifts to Nixon

WASHINGTON, Dec. 16 (AP) —A public relations executive says he established 150 secret fund-raising committees for President Nixon's campaign so that large contributors could avoid gift taxes by splitting up their contributions.

"This is a standard political practice used by both parties," Robert F. Bennett, president of Robert R. Mullen & Co., said in a disposition filed yesterday in United States District Court.

"It is little understood by the public at large," Mr. Bennett said. "I did understand it, and decided therefore, that this was a contribution I could make."

Mr. Bennett was questioned by William A. Dobrovir, a lawyer for the Ralph Nader Public Citizen organization and other consumer groups that are suing the Nixon Administration.

The groups contend in their lawsuit that the Agriculture Department raised milk price supports as a payoff for campaign contributions from three large dairymen's groups.

Mr. Bennett said that almost all of the committees he set up had received \$2,500 each from dairymen, for a total of \$232,500 in July, August and September, 1971.

He said that to comply with Internal Revenue Service regulations, each of his committees had a different treasurer, making them separate recipients under I.R.S. rules.

Gift-tax regulations exempt an individual's gifts of up to \$3,000 in a single year to a single recipient.

Mr. Bennett said that setting up the multiple committees was his own idea, but he added that he had received help on "the legal background" from Tom Evans, then of Mr. Nixon's old law firm, Mudge, Rose, Guthrie & Alexander, and later co-chairman of the Republican National Committee.