

An Oil Company Will Reap Billions



— Jack Anderson

A BILLION-DOLLAR contract and a crucial government appointment have been won by the corporations which admitted giving illegal donations to President Nixon's reelection campaign.

Both American Airlines and Ashland Oil, the confessed secret contributors, have benefitted mightily from recent government decisions.

Ashland will reap billions from an agreement reached July 25 with the oil-rich kingdom of Iran. The landmark agreement needed U.S. government sanction. Ashland will share 50-50 with Iran in producing, refining and marketing oil that will move from the wells of Iran to the gas stations of America.

★ ★ ★

THE ADMINISTRATION wanted the contract now to insure a stable Middle East supply of oil. Iran benefits by being able to buy more U.S. weaponry, principally the new Navy F-14 fighter.

On July 20, Ashland's chairman, Orin E. Atkins, acknowledged that his firm poured \$100,000 in corporate cash into the Nixon coffers.

On July 6, American Airlines made the first corporate disclosure. Chairman George Spater told of raising \$75,000 for the President's campaign. Of this \$55,000 was in corporate funds, which under the law cannot be given to political campaigns.

The illegal donation, which was "laun-

dered" through a Lebanese broker, came at a time when the Civil Aeronautics Board was considering an American merger proposal. The proposed merger with Western Airlines was eventually turned down, with CAB member Bob Timm the lone American supporter.

Yet astonishingly, Timm was subsequently appointed chairman of the CAB. It turns out he is an old locker mate and partner of Charlie Strickler, American Airlines' Washington-based vice president.

★ ★ ★

EARLIER this year, the White House tried to pull strings to get another pro-American Airlines man on the CAB. Judge Les West of Oklahoma, the State where American has its major maintenance base, was selected to replace Robert Murphy. West, however, was blocked by the crusty Senator Norris Cotton (Rep-N.H.), who rebuffed the pleas of White House fixer Peter Flanigan.

Both Timm and Strickler were out of town and unable to be reached for comment. An American Airlines spokesman said it would be "inappropriate" to comment in light of an investigation by special Watergate prosecutor Archibald Cox.

Ashland Oil told us there was "no truth" to any allegation of a connection between its illegal contribution and its agreement with the Iran government. "We've been talking to Iran for a number of years," a spokesman said.