

Phillips Pleads Guilty to Illegal Nixon Contribution

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Dec. 4—The Phillips Petroleum Company and its former board chairman, William W. Keeler, pleaded guilty in United States District Court here today to contributing \$100,000 illegally to President Nixon's 1972 campaign.

The company, the seventh corporation found to have made such illegal contributions in 1972, was given a maximum fine of \$5,000 by District Court Judge Howard Corcoran. Mr. Keeler, now retired, was fined \$1,000.

The pleas were made shortly after the special Watergate prosecutor's office filed a criminal information charging Mr. Keeler with consenting to the cash contribution between Feb. 9 and March 28, 1972.

An assistant Watergate pros-

ecutor, Thomas McBride, told Judge Corcoran that the Phillips company and Mr. Keeler came forward voluntarily in August and cooperated "fully" in the investigation of illegal contributions.

Mr. McBride also revealed that Phillips had acknowledged giving from \$50,000 to \$60,000 to "a substantial number of Congressional and Senate

candidates" in the 1970 and 1972 elections. He said that the statute of limitations had not expired on these illegal donations, but that the special prosecutor's policy was to bring charges against the "largest of the contributions."

Mr. McBride said his office would "press the case against the recipients" of the illegal Congressional contributions.

Mr. Keeler refused comment today when asked the circumstances surrounding the contribution. The former Phillips chairman, who is said to have served as coordinator of the petroleum industry's 1972 political contributions, has also refused to talk to Senate Watergate committee's investigators. The Phillips company an-

nounced in August that Mr. Keeler had made the illegal donation without the permission of its board of directors. A spokesman for the President's campaign finance committee also announced on the same day, that it was returning the money "because we don't accept illegal contributions."

The New York Times

Published: December 5, 1973

Copyright © The New York Times