

Rockefeller Brother Urged Nixon in 1972 To Aid Air Merger

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 15 — Laurance S. Rockefeller said today that he sent a telegram to President Nixon in August, 1972, urging Mr. Nixon to allow Eastern Airlines, in which the Rockefellers have an interest, to acquire Caribair, an airline based in Puerto Rico. Seven months later, Mr. Nixon reversed a decision by the Civil Aeronautics Board and approved the acquisition.

In a statement issued through a spokesman in response to a question, Mr. Rockefeller dismissed the possibility of any relationship between his appeal on the airline matter and a Rockefeller family donation of \$200,000 to the Nixon re-election campaign, made four months before Mr. Rockefeller sent the telegram to Mr. Nixon.

"It would not have occurred to me that my support of the Republican party would cancel my rights to be heard on any issue on its merits," Mr. Rockefeller said through George Taylor, a family press spokesman.

In his telegram to the President, Mr. Rockefeller cited his long association with Eastern, which he had served as a director; his sponsorship of two resort hotels in Puerto Rico,

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NIXON, IN '72, GOT ROCKEFELLER PLEA

Brother of Nominee Sent a Wire Asking President to Approve Airline Merger

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and his personal involvement in "the well-being, economic development and improvement of living standards in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands."

The House Judiciary Committee plans to investigate whether there was any connection between the campaign contribution and Mr. Nixon's action, although no one has yet alleged any connection. The committee investigation is in connection with President Ford's nomination of Nelson A. Rockefeller, brother of Laurance Rockefeller, to be Vice President.

Br. Taylor said today that Laurance Rockefeller, who has been identified as the single largest sockholder in Eastern, owned 1.75 per cent of the airline's stock. He said that he did not know of Eastern holdings by other members of the Rockefeller family.

Hugh Morrow, Nelson Rockefeller's press secretary, said in response to an inquiry yesterday that the former New York Governor owned no stock in Eastern Airlines.

However, the Chase Manhattan Bank, the Rockefeller family bank, holds 6.1 per cent of Eastern Airlines stock in trust and is the prime lender of a \$300-million loan to the airline.

Yesterday, a White House aide who handled the matter for Mr. Nixon and a member of the air board both said that they were unaware of any special involvement of the Rockefellers in the deliberations that led the President to approve the acquisition.

Flanigan Role Cited

Congressional sources today learned of the involvement of Peter M. Flanigan, Mr. Ford's nominee for Ambassador to Spain, in the White House's disposition of the case.

The Flanigan nomination has been delayed by accusations by Herbert W. Kalmbach, a former Nixon fund raiser, that when Mr. Flanigan was a White House staff member he "sold" ambassadorships. Mr. Flanigan has vigorously denied the charge.

The congressional sources said that Mr. Flanigan's involvement as the individual in charge of the Caribair acquisition matter at the White House would, by itself, require close scrutiny.

In response to an inquiry, Laurance Rockefeller said that his telegram, sent Aug. 25, 1972, was the only time he directly interviewed at the White House in behalf of Eastern Airlines' proposal to acquire Caribair.