

Campaign Gift-- A Surprise Plea

Washington

Executive vice president John H. Melcher of American Shipbuilding Co. pleaded guilty yesterday to concealing an illegal \$25,000 contribution to President Nixon's re-election campaign.

The surprise plea, entered before U.S. District Judge John Hart, may indicate Melcher will testify against George M. Steinbrenner III, the company's chief executive who is under indictment for allegedly masterminding such contributions in 1972.

The judge delayed sentencing of Melcher on the misdemeanor charge, which tence of a year in jail and a \$5000 fine. He is the tenth person to plead guilty in connection with illegal corporate contributions, and three others have been charged.

Melcher said in his guilty plea that Steinbrenner "willfully and unlawfully" agreed to make a corporate contribution to the Nixon campaign on behalf of American Shipbuilding.

Melcher himself, the plea said, "did relieve, comfort and assist Steinbrenner in order to hinder and prevent

Steinbrenner's apprehension, trial and punishment . . . by using a false and misleading explanation of the \$25,000 contribution."

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