

Probers Release The ITT Papers

Washington

The House Judiciary Committee published yesterday voluminous documentation on the tangled web known as "the ITT affair."

But no document substantiated conclusively an allegation that the Nixon administration's settlement of an antitrust suit against the International Telephone and Telegraph Corp. was in return for the conglomerate's pledge of up to \$400,000 for the Republican National Convention in 1972.

The settlement permitted the corporation to retain the Hartford Fire Insurance Co.

The allegation was at the core of the committee's inquiry as it pursued evidence of impeachment offenses, as it was at the core of the Senate Judiciary Committee's resumed hearings in March-April, 1972, on the nomination of Richard G. Kleindienst to be attorney general.

In the pages of the House committee's Volume No. 5 of evidence, there was plenty of documentation, most of it previously disclosed, that in the years 1969-1971, there had been many meetings of high administration and ITT officials as the company, headed by Harold S. Geneen, sought to persuade the administration to drop the antitrust suits or settle them favorably to the company.

There was no lack of documentation, most of it also disclosed earlier by the House commerce subcommittee on investigations and by the Senate Watergate hearings, that the administration went to great lengths to keep from congressional committees and the public a set of ITT memos about these meetings.

The meetings raised sharp questions about the truthfulness of some of the testimony by Kleindienst and former Attorney General John N. Mitchell at the

Kleindienst hearings.

But there was no government document to support the statement in the famous memo of Dita S. Beard, ITT lobbyist, to her boss, ITT vice president William R. Merriam on June 25, 1971, that "our noble commitment" of \$400,000 "has gone a long way toward our negotiations on the mergers (with Canteen Corp., Grinnel Corp. and Hartford) coming out as Hal (Geneen) wants them."

It was the Dita Beard memo that prompted Kleindienst to ask for a reopening of his confirmation hearings because, he said, he did not wish to be confirmed with "a cloud over my head."

But the hearings did produce a cloud over his head, as the documentation yesterday — which was also not new — showed that Kleindienst did not tell the truth when he said that, as deputy attorney general in charge of the litigation, he had left the ITT negotiations entirely up to Assistant Attorney General Richard W. McLaren, who as head of the antitrust division had brought the suits.

Nor did Kleindienst tell the truth when he said that he had not discussed the suits with anybody at the White House or with Attorney General John N. Mitchell and when he said that he had not been "pressured" at any time by the President.

It was those statements that led Kleindienst on May 10 to plead guilty to a misdemeanor for failing to answer "accurately and fully" the questions put to him.

For the truth was that on April 19, 1971, Mr. Nixon had called Kleindienst and ordered him not to appeal one of the suits to the Supreme Court.

And Mr. Nixon's knowledge that Kleindienst had not told the truth raised the question of his not disclosing a possible felony — a question that the Judiciary committee impeachment staff seemed to raise itself yesterday when it printed without comment Mr. Nixon's press statement of March 24, 1972, — after Kleindienst had testified — in which he said that his confidence in Kleindienst as "an honest man" had not been shaken.