

PLEDGE TO NIXON LINKED TO GREEK

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Panel Reports on \$20,000

Delivered by Mrs. Bentley

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 6—The sum of \$20,000 in cash which Mrs. Helen D. Bentley, the Federal Maritime Commission chairman, carried to the Nixon campaign in 1972 originated with a Greek shipping owner, according to Senate Watergate committee files.

Leo V. Berger, a tanker owner on Long Island, has told investigators the cash was obtained as a loan from Angelos Maroulis of Allied Sherring International in Athens.

Mrs. Bentley has denied any conflict of interest in her role in the cash dealings in 1972, but she has declined further comment.

The Federal Maritime Commission is the body that regulates the rates and routes for shipping on the high seas. The Watergate files do not show any link between Mr. Maroulis and Mrs. Bentley's agency.

Mr. Berger told Senate Watergate investigators that he gave the cash to Mrs. Bentley to deliver to the Nixon campaign during a secret fund-raising drive in early 1972 because he wanted her to "get credit" for it.

He was quoted as saying he "looked at Bentley as potential fund-raiser—thought she wanted to move up."

Mrs. Bentley, a former newspaper reporter on maritime affairs, was named head of the commission by President Nixon in 1969.

Listed as 2 Donations

The \$20,000 in cash was listed on Nixon campaign records as two donations of \$10,000 each from Mr. Berger and Peter Conostas, an official in his Avon Steamship Company of Lake Success, N.Y. Mr. Berger told the investigators he was constructing and financing tankers under Government subsidies through the Maritime Administration, an agency of the Commerce Department, which is separate from Mrs. Bentley's regulatory body. But he said he had nothing pending before her commission.

The tanker owner said the cash had been supplied by Mr. Maroulis as an unsecured loan with a 6 per cent interest rate. He said the note was to be repaid by the end of last year.

Mr. Berger said he had had business dealings with Mr. Maroulis that was the form in which he received the money from the Greek shipping Campaign onynduomriarlig-nitizens has sparked

controversy in recent elections, although such donations are not illegal. Mr. Maroulis is only the latest in a number of Greeks to be tied to the Nixon campaign financing. The late Nikos Vardinoyannis of Athens gave \$25,000 in 1972 while his company was obtaining a lucrative contract for refueling the United States Sixth Fleet in Greece.

Another \$10,000 each came from Constantine Dimantis, a ship owner, and from Spyros A. Metaxa, whose company produces a popular Greek brandy.