

Stans Said To Offer Guilt Plea

Deal Proposed To Avert Trial For Felonies

By Richard M. Cohen
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Former Commerce Secretary Maurice H. Stans, once former President Nixon's premier political fund-raiser, has offered to plead guilty to minor charges relating to his 1972 campaign fund-raising activities in exchange for having more serious charges dropped, informed sources said yesterday.

Stans' lawyers proposed the deal to outgoing special Watergate prosecutor Leon Jaworski more than two weeks ago, sources said, but it was not known what Jaworski's response was.

At the time, sources said, Jaworski told associates that the decision on the Stans case would be "a tough decision," possibly the toughest he had to make before leaving office later this week. The proposed deal, sources said, included Stans' offer to plead guilty to as many as six technical misdemeanors in exchange for having more serious felony charges dropped.

Neither Stans nor his lawyers could be reached for comment.

Stans, according to sources, made the offer in an attempt to avoid prosecution on charges that he received illegal campaign contributions while either Secretary of Commerce in the first Nixon administration or later when he was chairman of the Finance Committee for the Re-election of the President.

In June, Jaworski went to court to explain his attempt to gain access to personal correspondence between Stans and Mr. Nixon by saying that the Watergate grand jury had "circumstantial and direct evidence" that contributors to President Nixon's 1972 campaign sought or were promised federal jobs.

"Circumstantial and direct evidence before the grand jury and known to the special prosecutor indicates prima facie (on its face) that certain large campaign contributors either promised contributions in consideration of appointment to a federal post or were promised a position in return for a contribution," Jaworski said in papers filed in court.

Jaworski emphasized, however, that he was not then prepared to say who, if anyone, violated any federal laws.

Thus far, only one former

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Nixon campaign official has been charged with campaign financing violations. Mr. Nixon's former personal attorney, Herbert Kalmbach, pleaded guilty to charges relating to a secret 1970 campaign fund for Republican congressional candidates and to offering an ambassadorship in exchange for a contribution.

Stans and former Attorney General John N. Mitchell were accused of conspiracy, obstruction of justice and perjury in connection with a secret campaign contribution by fugitive financier Robert L. Vesco, but both former cabinet officials were acquitted of those charges.

Stans, acting as one of Mr. Nixon's chief 1972 political fund-raisers, attracted an estimated \$60 million to the Nixon campaign.

Since then, it has been alleged that the Nixon campaign:

- Induced contributions by promising donors federal jobs, in some cases ambassadorships.

- Encouraged contributions by firms or individuals who expected favorable governmental action in return.

- Accepted contributions from corporations such as various milk producers' associations that are barred by law from donating to federal political campaigns.

About 30 corporations and their officers have been charged with making illegal contributions to the Nixon campaign as well as to the campaigns of some Democratic presidential aspirants. Most of those charges resulted in guilty pleas.