

## Admits Illegal Gifts

By Richard M. Cohen  
Washington Post Staff Writer

The Ashland Oil Corp. pleaded guilty here yesterday to making more than \$150,000 in illegal corporate campaign contributions on behalf of both Republican and Democratic candidates—including a \$50,000 cash donation to the Democratic National Committee.

In response to a criminal information filed in U.S. District Court here, the Kentucky-based company admitted making illegal contributions to the campaigns of both Sens. John G. Tower (R-Tex.) and Hubert H. Humphrey (D-Minn.) and the unsuccessful senatorial campaign of former Kentucky Gov. Louie B. Nunn, a Republican.

In addition, the company said it funneled \$100,000 to various congressional and senatorial candidates in 1972 through a Washington-based middleman. The criminal information, prepared by Watergate Special Prosecutor Henry S. Ruth Jr., did not name the congressmen who allegedly received the money.

The contributions to the Democratic National Committee, the company said, were delivered to party chairman Robert S. Strauss between June, 1970, and February, 1972, when Strauss served as party treasurer.

In a statement, Strauss said he was under the impression the money came from individual Ashland executives and not from corporate coffers. "The record clearly reflects that there was no knowledge on the part of anyone at the Democratic National Committee that these gifts were corporate," United Press International quoted him as saying.

For Ashland, yesterday was the second time in little more than a year that the company has pleaded guilty to contributing corporate funds in a fed-

See ASHLAND, A5, Col. 2

## Oil Firm Pleads Guilty In Campaign Gift Case

ASHLAND, From A1

eral election campaign. In November, 1973, Ashland and its board chairman, Orin Atkins, admitted contributing \$100,000 in corporate funds to President Nixon's campaign committee. The company was fined \$5,000.

Yesterday's appearance before Chief U.S. District Court Judge George L. Hart Jr. came as time was running out on the special prosecutor's ability to prosecute violations of the federal campaign law. In January, amendments to the law will take effect that lower the statute of limitation from five to three years.

Ashland admitted contributing \$6,864.65 in connection with Humphrey's 1970 senatorial and 1972 presidential campaign. The contributions were made by persons associated with Ashland who were later reimbursed by the company.

A spokesman for Humphrey, David Gartner, said both campaign committees received personal checks. "No one in the organization was aware that corporate funds were involved," he said.

A similar method was used, Ashland said, to funnel \$2,500 into Tower's successful 1972

Senate campaign. The money was given to the Friends of John Tower Committee. Tower could not be reached for comment.

The information said the \$100,000 Ashland distributed in 1971 and 1972 to various congressional and senatorial candidates was delivered in cash to Carl Arnold, identified by his office as a paid consultant. Arnold, in turn, was said to have distributed the money to the candidates.

Arnold could not be reached for comment. In a statement his office said was left by him, Arnold said, "Mr. Arnold did not know that the funds were from corporate sources."

Arnold worked for a time for the American Petroleum Institute in its government affairs division, a spokesman there said, and left three or four years ago to open his own consulting firm.

In fining the corporation, Judge Hart ordered it to pay the maximum allowed by law—\$5,000—for each of the five violations. Charles A. McNelis, Ashland's lawyer, said he presumed Atkins would pay the fine out of his own pocket. He said that Atkins had personally paid the last fine.