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Editorial Page

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S-B — Thursday, May 26, 1977

## Quello smeared by a bureaucrat

The experience of Federal Communications Commissioner James H. Quello of Grosse Pointe stands as a classic example of why more qualified people do not seek or accept public appointments.

In 1974, Quello ended an illustrious 27-year career in the radio industry, his last post being general manager of Detroit Radio Station WJR, to accept appointment to the FCC as a Democrat. Former President Nixon, whose reelection Quello had supported, made the appointment.

Quello survived eight days of grueling hearings before a Senate committee which ended up approving his nomination after sifting charges that he was a racist — charges refuted by many blacks and others and unsupported by Quello's record — and that he was an industry "stooge," a Ralph Nader claim that also was unsubstantiated.

During those record-breaking hearings, Quello's finances were thoroughly checked out and found to be in order.

Now, because he has accumulated minor amounts of stocks in three companies related to the communications industry, no matter how tenuously or remotely, Quello is charged by a House Commerce subcommittee with "conflict of interest."

The charges are absurd because the stocks were

accumulated well before Quello's appointment, were reported to the FCC at the time of his confirmation hearings, and were included on a list of stocks in which FCC employes are prohibited from investing which was drawn up after the appointment and which did not even exist when he was named to the regulatory body.

If there had been any question about his holdings constituting a "conflict" at the time of the confirmation hearing — any substantial communications holdings would have been challenged, list or no list — Quello's muckraking enemies would have seized that as a weapon to use against him.

Further, Quello said he immediately will divest himself of the estimated \$20,000 worth of stock to avoid any possible appearance of conflict.

FCC Chairman Richard Wiley says he is convinced Quello is not guilty of any conflict of interest and he is standing squarely behind him.

Quello, who enjoyed an excellent reputation in Detroit and throughout the radio industry, no doubt will be exonerated of any wrongdoing. The charges probably will die aborning.

But that's not the point. The fact is that any public servant, no matter how high his office, can be publicly smeared and humiliated by Washington's many mudslinging bureaucrats.

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