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A Section

Democratic Donor Chung Invokes 5th Amendment; House Members Informally
 Interview Businessman
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 Washington Post Staff Writer

Democratic contributor Johnny Chung invoked the Fifth Amendment against self-incrimination before members of a House committee yesterday, but then provided some information, not under oath, about his role as a major financial backer of President Clinton and the Democratic National Committee.

Chung spent about three hours yesterday morning with members of the House Government Reform and Oversight Committee and continued the session after the committee held a public hearing on campaign financing improprieties during the 1996 election cycle.

"We did get some information we think will be helpful down the line," Chairman Dan Burton (R-Ind.) said of the informal interview with Chung. "We will pursue those leads."

But Rep. Henry A. Waxman (Calif.), the committee's ranking Democrat, said he had heard nothing to change his view that Chung was simply a political "hustler" who hoped to exploit his purchased access to the White House to advance his private business interests. Waxman said Chung earlier had submitted to similar informal interview sessions with investigators from the Justice Department and the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee. Chung was not called to testify before the Senate committee.

Chung, a California businessman, gave \$366,000 to the DNC before the 1996 election. All of his contributions have been returned, including a \$50,000 check that he handed to Hillary Rodham Clinton's chief of staff during one of his many visits to the White House complex in 1995. Two days after making that donation, Chung, with the help of DNC officials, escorted six Chinese businessmen to the White House to watch the president deliver his weekly radio address.

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On Thursday, Nancy Hernreich, Clinton's appointments and scheduling aide, told the committee Clinton had expressed displeasure about the presence of the Chinese businessmen at the radio address. A month later, White House aides asked the National Security Council if they should give Chung photos from the visit showing Clinton with the businessmen.

Former NSC aide Brooke Darby testified that, based on information from Robert L. Suettinger, then the NSC's China expert, she recommended against giving Chung the pictures.

In what is now a well-known description of Chung, Suettinger told Darby release of the pictures would do no "lasting damage to U.S. foreign policy" but warned that Chung was a "hustler" who was trying to advance his business and would become "a royal pain" to White House officials.

Suettinger told the panel yesterday that he knew of or was able to verify that all but one of the Chinese visitors were officials of legitimate Chinese enterprises. The exception was James Y. Sun, described by Chung as a "young entrepreneur and self-made millionaire."

There are relatively few self-made millionaires in the People's Republic of China," Suettinger said in deadpan fashion.

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CAPTION: House panel Chairman Dan Burton, left, escorts **Democratic donor** Johnny Chung down Rayburn Building hall, where they faced throng of photographers.

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