

## Hughes Hired O'Brien

*Post 7-14-74*  
Billionaire recluse Howard Hughes paid between \$165,000 and \$180,000 to a public relations firm headed by Lawrence F. O'Brien while he was chairman of the Democratic National Committee, according to a Senate Watergate committee staff document.

What the firm did to earn the fees was not immediately known. O'Brien declined to comment for the record in a telephone interview with Morton Kondracke, a Washington correspondent of the Chicago Sun-Times who learned of the staff paper. As of late yesterday O'Brien could not be reached by The Washington Post.

Committee chairman Sam J. Ervin Jr. (D-N.C.) decided not to include the paper in the committee's final report, although the document is expected to be released separately later.

According to Fred Thompson, the committee's minority counsel, Ervin acted at his urging. Thompson told a Washington Post reporter in a telephone interview that he thought a draft staff report in

See O'BRIEN, A13, Col. 1

# Hughes Paid O'Brien Firm

## O'BRIEN, From A1

a telephone interview that he thought a draft staff report in which the information concerning the retainer appeared was highly speculative and should not be included in the committee's report, Ervin and chief committee counsel Samuel Dash agreed, Thompson said.

According to Kondracke's account:

The public relations firm was on a \$15,000-per-month retainer from Hughes between October, 1969, and sometime in February, 1971, according to records obtained by the committee from Chester Davis, an attorney for Hughes.

O'Brien became Democratic National Committee chairman in March, 1970, about five months after Hughes retained the firm, which is based in New York City.

Dash said the 60-page document, focusing on an early 1972 burglary attempt at the office of a Las Vegas publisher, was deleted because it contained "highly speculative theories" on reasons for the later break-in and bugging of Democratic National Committee headquarters in the Watergate office building.

The theory was that when G. Gordon Liddy and E. Howard Hunt Jr. aborted their plan to steal informa-

tion on Hughes' connections with O'Brien and with President Nixon's friend, C. G. (Bebe) Rebozo, from the safe of publisher Hank Greenspun, they tapped O'Brien's phone and raided his office.

According to the theory, Liddy and Hunt hoped to intercept information coming to O'Brien that was potentially damaging to O'Brien himself, to Rebozo, former Attorney General John N. Mitchell or to President Nixon's brother Donald, all of whom had Hughes connections.

Pursuing the theory, staff committee members obtained records from Hughes, attorney Davis.

Committee sources said that when O'Brien was interviewed by the staff, he confirmed the figures provided by Davis. The staff was not certain exactly how much O'Brien received in total because it was not clear whether his firm was paid for February, 1971.

It is a matter of public record that Hughes was an O'Brien client and that O'Brien's son took over management of the firm when O'Brien became unpaid Democratic committee chairman, though O'Brien remained on the firm's board.

Committee sources said there is no indication in the record that O'Brien did any-

# \$165,000 in 1969-1971

thing unethical or illegal while on the Hughes retainer.

In fact, one committee source said, "for the kind of money he got, he did relatively little." The source said that in his interview with the committee staff, O'Brien "did not have a long list" of things that he did. Nor could Hughes attorney Davis identify any significant O'Brien activities, the source said.

Other findings on Hughes-Rebozo were released last week, including data on a relentless effort by former White House aide John D. Ehrlichman to force the Internal Revenue Service to find grounds for prosecuting

O'Brien on tax charges. The IRS concluded that no grounds existed.

The released portion of the study said that "the Hughes Tool Co. made substantial payments to Lawrence F. O'Brien & Associates (the public relations firm) during 1970," but it has never before been publicly documented that O'Brien was on retainer during his Democratic chairmanship. Nor has the amount of his payments from Hughes been disclosed.

Dash said the staff's report on the Greenspun burglary attempt was declared a "committee document" at the time it was deleted from

the final report. He said it will be made available to the press this week, along with other committee material.

Because of "theorizing" in the document, said Dash, "we did not deem it to be up to the standard of the other material in the final report. We did not want to write a report on theorizing, but on facts."

Excised from the report along with the theories, however, were some additional facts, committee sources said.

They include information that Hughes agents "participated heavily" in Liddy and Hunt's planning

for breaking into Greenspun's safe, that "sources in Las Vegas"—presumably from the Hughes organization—provided Liddy and Hunt with "charts and maps" of Greenspun's offices, and that Greenspun's safe was believed to contain reams of material provided by Robert Maheu, a former top aide who broke with Hughes.

Committee sources said the staff found that information on the possible contents of Greenspun's safe was provided to White House aide Charles W. Colson by Robert Bennett and that Bennett knew of the planned burglary in advance.