

Hughes \$10,000 for race

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LOS ANGELES — A Las Vegas (Nev.) gambling casino owned by Howard Hughes gave \$10,000 in cash to the 1970 Maryland campaign of a protegee of Vice President Spiro T. Agnew — and depositions filed here allege that Agnew initiated the transaction.

“... it was an Agnew request of Mr. Hughes, and... Mr. Hughes wanted to do it, and it had to be done,” Thomas G. Bell, Hughes' former assistant for political affairs, said in a deposition.

The funds — \$10,000 in \$100 bills — were obtained from the cashier's cage of Hughes' Silver Slipper Casino for the Maryland gubernatorial campaign of Agnew's friend and former administrative assistant, C. Stanley Blair.

The money was flown to Washington, D.C., and deposited in a Blair campaign account, according to campaign officials. The donor's identity was concealed, one official said, and does not appear in the Blair for Governor Committee reports.

Alvin B. Krongard, the Blair committee's treasurer, said he believes the \$10,000 contribution was reported anonymously as part of a total \$12,000 Blair netted from ticket sales to a campaign “bull roast” — a Maryland fundraising affair.

Agnew's press secretary, J. Marsh Thomson, would not respond directly to Newsday queries about the allegation that the vice president had personally requested the Hughes contribution. Nor would he provide a direct comment from Agnew on the matter.

Instead, Thomson issued the following statement through an assistant: “The vice president's office has no knowledge of any such intervention by the vice president and suggests the only place to verify the reasons for any contributions by Mr. Hughes would be his (Hughes') office.”

When a reporter noted that this statement did not deny that Agnew had a role in the transaction but only said Agnew's office did not know about any such role, the press secretary's assistant replied: “We are aware of that. But this is all we will have to say.”

Hughes' spokesman, Richard Hanna, declined to comment on the transaction.

Blair, a Republican, was defeated by Democratic incumbent Gov. Marvin Mandel in the 1970 election and was subsequently appointed by President Nixon to a U.S. District Court judgeship in Baltimore. Blair, although in his courthouse office, would not come to the phone on two occasions that reporters called to get his comment.

The cash contribution was set in motion at

office and carried it in a manila envelope to Washington, D.C., where he handed it over to Gus Constantine, a Blair campaign associate who had been employed in Agnew's office.

The funds were deposited in a Blair campaign account in a Washington suburban branch of the Maryland National Bank, according to Constantine. Just where the money went from there cannot be documented independently at this time because all Blair campaign records have been subpoenaed by the Justice Department in its probe of kickback charges against Agnew.

Sources close to Maheu insisted that political contributions from Hughes' casino and from his personal account were made in cash, rather than by check, only when Hughes himself so stipulated. Unless Hughes ordered a

cash contribution, according to the sources, the money would be transferred to a Maheu account, and a check drafted by Maheu to the political recipient.

The contribution to the Blair campaign immediately followed Agnew's Sept. 14, 1970, appearance in Las Vegas to spearhead fundraising efforts for Nevada Republican candidates for U.S. senator and governor.

Maheu and the vice president have been friends for a number of years, according to sources close to Maheu, and they saw each other during the Agnew visit. The vice-presidential party stayed at the Frontier Hotel, one of the many Maheu-directed enterprises owned by Hughes, who at that time was living in seclusion atop the Desert Inn Hotel just across the road.

the time of Agnew's September, 1970, visit to Las Vegas for a speaking engagement. The transaction was disclosed in depositions for a libel suit filed against Hughes by Robert A. Maheu, who headed all of Hughes' Las Vegas enterprises until Dec. 7, 1970, when he was fired.

Since the Silver Slipper is not a corporation — it is wholly owned by Hughes — it is not illegal for the casino funds to be contributed to an election campaign provided they are properly reported for tax purposes. The Internal Revenue Service is investigating the \$10,000 transaction, as well as other cash contributions flowing from the Silver Slipper.

According to the depositions and interviews with persons involved in the transaction, the money moved like this:

Shortly after Agnew's departure from Las Vegas, Maheu authorized the cash withdrawal from the casino, and it was given by Bell Hooper, another Hughes official, to a public relations man on Maheu's

and out the cash in Hooper's of-