

Jack Anderson and Les Whitten Hughes' Largesse Lives

"Everyone has his price," Howard R. Hughes once told his associate, Noah Dietrich. Each election year, the eccentric billionaire doled out hundreds of thousands of dollars to political candidates.

The beneficiaries of his largesse ran the political gamut from Presidents to sheriffs. Usually, the money was distributed in cash.

Sources close to Hughes' Nevada operation say that an attorney for Hughes passed out the big money to the gubernatorial and congressional candidates and that a public relations adviser delivered the small contributions to the local politicians.

Chester Smith, an aide to former Sen. Alan Bible, (D-Nev.), explained how it worked to the Internal Revenue Service. According to a confidential IRS report, Smith stated "that sometime in September, 1968, an employee of the Hughes organization gave Smith \$30,000 to \$80,000 in currency somewhere in downtown Las Vegas."

Smith confirmed to our associate Bob Owens that he had collected the cash and that Bible "knew about it." Smith stressed that all the money had been used in the campaign.

Like Bible, Sen. Howard Cannon, (D-Nev.), received cash from Hughes. Evidence in the files of the Securities and Exchange Commission states that Cannon "received between \$30,000 and \$70,000 in contributions from the Hughes organization."

At least two separate cash deliveries were made, one to Cannon's campaign treasurer, Jerome Mack, the other to Cannon's administrative assistant Chester Sobsey. A spokesman said the senator "has never handled fund-raising personally" but "knew that the Hughes organization" had donated.

Hughes wasn't interested in the politics of the candidates he supported; he merely wanted to be sure that those in power would be friendly to his interests.

In 1968, for example, the tycoon confided in a memo to aide Robert Maheu: "I feel there is a really valid possibility of a Republican victory this year." Ri-

chard M. Nixon subsequently received at least \$150,000 from Hughes.

We reported on Aug. 6, 1971, that Hughes executive Richard Danner had delivered two \$50,000 cash bundles to Nixon's seaside retreats at Key Biscayne and San Clemente.

As some Senate Watergate investigators put the pieces together, Nixon suspected that then-Democratic National Chairman Lawrence F. O'Brien had tipped us off to the story, so the Watergate burglars were sent into O'Brien's office to find out what evidence he had about the Nixon-Hughes connection.

In the same 1971 story, we reported that Hughes had instructed Maheu to deliver \$50,000 to Hubert H. Humphrey during his last year as Vice President. The billionaire thought that Humphrey could help stop the Nevada nuclear testing, which Hughes feared could keep customers away from his Las Vegas hotels and casinos.

Hughes may be dead, but his empire hasn't forgotten his political favorites. Cannon, who is running for re-election, has collected contributions from a veritable "Who's Who" of the Hughes' Summa Corp.

Under the new election reform laws, the donations are severely limited. Among Cannon's contributors are Chester Davis, Summa general counsel, \$1,000; Nadine Henley and Frank W. Gay, Summa vice presidents, \$100 apiece; Hughes associate Walter Kane and publicist Perry Lieber, \$100 apiece; former Hughes attorney Edward P. Morgan, \$1,000, and Richard Danner, \$200.

Cannon also has collected \$1,000 from the Hughes Active Citizenship Fund.

Watch on Waste — Although the Postal Service is hovering on the brink of bankruptcy, it has produced one of the most handsome annual reports in the federal government.

The 58-page glossy booklet whose main purpose seems to be to glorify Benjamin F. Bailar, the Postmaster General, upset Sen. Richard Schweiker, (R-Pa.), who asked the General Accounting Office to find out how much it cost. The answer: \$21,100 for 24,000 copies, most of them unneeded.