

NIXON-REBOZO BID ON GIFT REPORTED

aide Said to Have Testified the President and Banker Met With Him on Hughes

By JOHN M. CREWDSON

WASHINGTON, Jan. 28.—Aid White House details said the White House official source elaborated today on their evidence that President Nixon indirectly admitted a contribution from the Howard Hughes organization during the Nixon campaign for the White House in 1968.

News accounts yesterday that Richard G. Danner, an aide of Mr. Nixon's 1968 campaign who is now an associate of Mr. Hughes, told the committee in a secret session Dec. 18 that Mr. Nixon had personally asked him to determine whether the billionaire industrialist was willing to contribute.

"We have denied the whole thing," Gerald E. Wines, a deputy White House press secretary, said today. "We've denied that the President discussed with Mr. Danner any possible contribution from Hughes."

Summer of 1963

One Senate source would add that the witness's testimony referred to a meeting, probably in Washington, of Mr. Danner, Mr. Nixon and Charles E. Rebozo during the summer of 1963 at which the possibility of a Hughes donation was raised by both Mr. Nixon and Mr. Rebozo.

The source said that according to Mr. Danner's testimony, neither Mr. Nixon nor Mr. Rebozo mentioned a specific amount that would be solicited from the billionaire. Other reports today described Mr. Nixon as having suggested \$50,000. Mr. Danner denied to United Press International last night that the President had ever solicited, through him, a \$50,000 donation from Mr. Hughes. His office in the Hughes-owned Sands Hotel in Las Vegas, when Mr. Danner makes referred requests for comment to a Hughes representative in Los Angeles.

Mr. Danner, the Senate source related, did not specifically recall in his December testimony whether it was Mr. Nixon or Mr. Rebozo, the President's close friend, who wrenched the subject of the Hughes contribution.

But Mr. Danner is understood

committee staff that both men expressed the desirability of attempting to obtain a donation.

Mr. Danner, who had taken leave from his Washington law practice to work full-time in the Nixon campaign, then got in touch with Edward J. Morgan, a lawyer who had represented some of Mr. Hughes' interests here, and a friend of 20 years. It was Mr. Danner who introduced Mr. Nixon to Mr. Morgan in Florida about a year ago.

Mr. Morgan recalled a telephone conversation that he had with Mr. Danner in the Federal Bureau of Investigation during World War II, approached him sometime between Aug. 18, 1968, when Mr. Nixon received the Republican Party Presidential nomination and the election in November.

News accounts yesterday that Mr. Morgan said he was asked whether Mr. Danner would be interested in contributing to the Nixon campaign, and told Mr. Danner that he would find out.

He said he spoke with a Hughes representative, whom he identified as Robert Maheu. Mr. Maheu has since filed a libel suit against his former employer.

Mr. Morgan said he was told by Mr. Maheu that Mr. Hughes would favorably disposed to making a "residential" contribution to Mr. Nixon, provided that the money would be acknowledged by and on behalf of the candidate.

Mr. Morgan said that the acknowledgment mentioned was not to be made public, but one in which Mr. Hughes would "acknowledge the receipt" in the campaign. Other news reports today said Mr. Maheu made the suggestion.

Mr. Morgan, according to the Senate source's report, said that testimony by Mr. Nixon and Mr. Rebozo to the witness Mr. Nixon was interested in making such a contribution.

Mr. Morgan recalled the meeting, which he said took place at Mr. Rebozo's suite in the Mayflower Hotel here. He said that he requested an "acknowledgment" from Mr. Rebozo and was not adequately satisfied when he felt that the condition could be met.

His deposition on file in Los Angeles in connection with the Maheu civil suit, Mr. Danner said that when Mr. Rebozo was told that Donald Nixon, the President's brother, and John Meier, another Hughes employee, might be involved in delivering the money, the

way and said it was best just to forget it.

One source involved in the arrangements suggested today that Mr. Rebozo's reluctance might have stemmed from his recollection of the political problems Mr. Nixon had as a

result of a \$205,000 mortgage loan from Howard Hughes to his brother Donald a decade earlier.

In any event, Mr. Morgan said he then telephoned someone, apparently Mr. Maheu, and recommended that the contribution not be made.

A few months later, in December of 1968, Mr. Maheu and Paul L'Esail, the former Governor of Nevada, went to Palm Springs, Calif., where President-elect Nixon was staying at the house of Walter Annenberg, now the American Ambassador in London.

Mr. Maheu carried \$50,000 in \$100 bills, according to testimony taken in connection with his lawsuit, and the two

men asked to see Mr. Nixon but were told that he was too busy.

According to reports of the Watergate committee testimony, Mr. Danner, who was fired by the Hughes organization in February of 1969, finally delivered the \$50,000 payment to Mr. Rebozo in July of 1970, and a second \$50,000 payment in August of that year.

Charles C. Davis, the chief counsel for Mr. Hughes's Supreme Corporation, has told the committee that the \$100,000 payment was intended for the 1970 Republican Congressional elections, but Mr. Rebozo has said he believed the funds were intended for Mr. Nixon's reelection last year.