

NIXON-REBOZO BID ON GIFT REPORTED

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

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 16— Amid White House denials, Senate Watergate committee sources elaborated today on their evidence that President Nixon indirectly solicited a contribution from the Howard Hughes organization during the Nixon campaign for the White House in 1968.

News accounts yesterday said that Richard G. Danner, an official of Mr. Nixon's 1968 campaign who is now an employe 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 L. Warren, deputy White House press secretary, said today. "We have denied that the President discussed [with Mr. Danner] a possible contribution of any amount from Hughes."

Summer of 1968

One Senate source, however, said that the witness's testimony referred to a meeting, probably in Washington, of Mr. Danner, Mr. Nixon and Charles G. Rebozo during the summer of 1968 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 should 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, which Mr. Danner manages, 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 broached the subject of the Hughes contribution.

But Mr. Danner is understood

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

Mr. Danner, who had taken a leave from his Washington law practice to work full-time in the Nixon campaign, then got in touch with Edward P. Morgan, a lawyer who had represented some of Mr. Hughes's interests here, and a friend of 30 years. It was Mr. Danner who introduced Mr. Nixon and Mr. Rebozo in Florida about 20 years ago.

Mr. Morgan recalled in a telephone interview today that Mr. Danner, with whom he had served in the Federal Bureau of Investigation during World War II, approached him sometime between Aug. 8, 1968, when Mr. Nixon received the Republican party's Presidential nomination, and his election in November.

Private Acknowledgment

Mr. Morgan said he was asked whether Mr. Hughes 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 other sources 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 be favorably disposed to making a [campaign] 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 a public one, but one by which Mr. Hughes would "know that the people [in the campaign] who are meaningful recognize that he made the contribution."

A few weeks later, according to the Senate source's report of Mr. Danner's testimony, the Nixon campaign official met with Mr. Morgan and Mr. Rebozo to see whether Mr. Nixon was agreeable to making such an acknowledgment.

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 left that the condition would be met.

In a deposition on file in Los Angeles in connection with the Maheu civil suit, Mr. Danner said that when Mr. Rebozo was told that f. Donald Nixon, the President's brother, and John Meier, another Hughes employe, might be involved in delivering the money, "he didn't want it handled that 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 Laxalt, 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 his Watergate committee testimony Mr. Danner, who was hired by the Hughes organization in February of 1969, finally delivered one \$50,000 payment to Mr. Rebozo in July of 1970, and a second \$50,000 payment in August of that year.

Chester C. Davis, the chief counsel for Mr. Hughes's Summa 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.