

Jury Told Of Stans Pressure

Ex-SEC Official Tells of Effort In Vesco Case

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A key prosecution witness testified here today that presidential fundraiser Maurice H. Stans pressured him repeatedly to hide references to Robert L. Vesco's contribution to the 1972 Nixon campaign.

G. Bradford Cook, then a high official of the Securities and Exchange Commission, said that when he read Stans a paragraph from a complaint the SEC was about to file against Vesco, Stans said:

"Uh, oh, that gives me a problem."

Then, Cook testified, Stans said: "Do you need that in your case?" Cook said he didn't know.

"Do you need all the detail?" he quoted Stans as asking. Again, Cook said, he replied that he didn't know.

"Isn't your case primarily on looting?" he said Stans asked him, to which Cook said he replied, "That's correct."

Stans then asked, Cook said, "Why don't you see what you can do about it and get back to me—or look into it."

Cook said he did. He testified that he called Stanley Sporkin, who was heading the SEC's investigation of Vesco, into his office and pressed him as to why the detail was needed.

Several days later, Cook testified, the paragraph had been shortened and he called Stans and read the new one to him.

"He said, 'Well, that's better,'" said Cook, "or some type of acquiescence. I don't remember his exact words."

But, said Cook, Stans told him the new paragraph "might not solve it," that the SEC staff was planning to file transcripts with its case "that still might disclose the transaction" and asked Cook to "find out" about it.

Cook testified about the Stans pressures after telling the jury in the trial here of Stans and former Attorney General John Mitchell that he had asked Stans—an old friend of his father—for a chance to be SEC chairman.

He later became the chairman and was forced to quit six days after Mitchell and Stans were indicted in the case here on charges of conspiracy, ob-

See MITCHELL, A6, Col. 1

MITCHELL, From A1

struction of justice and perjury.

They are accused of trying to intervene in the SEC investigation of Vesco in exchange for a secret \$200,000 cash contribution from Vesco, then covering up the contribution, and finally lying about it.

Cook, 36, unemotionally detailed his contacts with Stans, former Secretary of Commerce.

He was the government's 26th witness against the two former Nixon campaign chiefs and Cabinet officers, following John W. Dean III to the stand.

Dean concluded his testimony this morning, again fending off intense cross-examination from attorneys for both Mitchell and Stans.

In the cross-examination, more detail of White House tape recordings came out, including Dean's total description to the President on March 20, 1973, of a call to him from Mitchell after Mitchell appeared before the grand jury here.

Dean told the President, according to the transcript, "I talked to him (Mitchell) outside, just talked to him about a half-hour ago. He had just come out of an incredible grilling before the Southern District—you know, the grand jury they've got there on the Vesco case, which is a runaway grand jury. He said he was asked questions that got into Hunt and Segretti and—er—contacts he had with Ehrlichman about the Vesco case, had he ever talked to Dean about the Vesco case—er—just all over the lot.

"He said it was an incredible session about—er—Don Nixon Jr., about Ed Nixon, your brother—er—he said he never saw anything like it, just totally without controls."

A transcript of a Feb. 28 conversation also came out, in which the President said to Dean, after Dean said Vesco had sandbagged his youngest brother, Edward, into involvement with his contribution, "I know that. I know that myself. So you sort of lean to having Stans starting out there."

And Dean told the President—and the exact references in his comments are unclear—"I think it would take a lot of the teeth out of it, you know, the stardom the people are trying to build up to. If Stans has already gone to a hearing in another committee, obviously they will use everything they have at that time and it won't be a hell of a lot. It confuses the public. The public is bored with this thing already."

In that same conversation, Dean testified that he told the President, "For all purposes, the donor, Vesco—" at which the President interrupted and said, "Stans would never do a thing like that, never," and Dean said, "No, never," and the President said, "Never, never."

The Feb. 28 conversation between Mr. Nixon and Dean had been prompted by a story in The Washington Post that morning in which activities of Edward Nixon in conjunction with Vesco's contribution were detailed, along with side-by-side pictures of the two.

Whether defense attorneys denied the testimony of Dean against Mitchell and Stans is, of course for the jury to decide, but sources close to both sides said they felt that Dean's credibility as a witness had held up extremely well.

How well Cook's credibility will hold up is another ques-

tion, since his story of his involvement in the case as he told it to two congressional committees last year varied from what he stated today.

It varied so much, in fact, that the judge allowed the defense attorneys an extra few hours — until 1:30 Thursday — to through his earlier testimony so they can cross-examine properly.

Cook testified that his father, head of the Nixon fundraising campaign in Nebraska in both 1968 and 1972, had gone to Washington in 1971 to get his son a job.

Cook said he told his father he wanted an SEC commissionership, but ended up as general counsel.

He said his father arranged a goose-hunting trip in Texas in November, 1972, to which Stans was invited. So were Cook, presidential lawyer Herbert W. Kalmbach, fund raiser Kenneth Dahlberg and four other men, Cook said.

In a rice field one day on the hunt, Cook said, Stans came over to him and asked him what his future plans were, and he told Stans he hoped to succeed William J. Casey as the SEC chairman.

After some discussion of that—as to whether a lawyer or an accountant should be SEC chairman—and what Stans' plans were, Cook told Stans about the movement of \$250,000 around New Jersey in April, 1972.

"I said I had read or I had heard or understood that Mr. Vesco had given \$50,000 to the election committee," Cook testified.

He quoted Stans as saying, "I don't think we took any money from Vesco and, if we did, I believe it would be in checks."

Earlier testimony here has suggested that Vesco gave \$50,000 to the campaign by check and that \$200,000—in \$100 bills from Vesco—was given directly to Stans on Apr. 10.

Cook said he asked Stans if he would find out about the money, and Stans agreed.

When Stans called him in Washington two days later, he said, he had the proposed SEC case against Vesco on his desk and told Stans about the paragraph and Stans asked him to look into it.

Before the trial was adjourned until Thursday, Cook testified as to three other contacts with Stans.

In one call, he said, Stans complained that a transcript filed with the SEC case mentioned the money.

In another, Stans asked him to meet him at the White House mess—a basement dining room—where he showed him a letter returning Vesco's whole \$250,000.

Cook said he told Stans, "I can't understand how you ever could have taken that sort of money from that kind of man." He said Stans replied that they had taken it on politician Harry Sears' assurance that the SEC case was minor.

Cook said he appealed to Stans to make the contribution public, but that Stans appealed to him to keep the SEC case from going into it and "causing embarrassment."

Stans asked, he said, "if we could limit our scope of our inquiry."