

Stans Testifies on Vesco Contribution

New York

Former Commerce Secretary Maurice H. Stans testified yesterday that he kept secret a \$200,000 cash contribution to President Nixon's re-election campaign, solely to keep a pledge of secrecy to the donor, financier Robert L. Vesco.

At no time, Stans swore to a U.S. District Court jury of nine men and three women, did Vesco ever receive any kind of payoff in return for the secret contribution.

"That was behind the whole thing," said Stans, appearing in his own behalf. "Vesco made a contribution in private and privacy was his constitutional right under the law.

"I was doing my best to protect Robert Vesco and every other contributor up to April 7."

A new law took effect April 7, 1972, mandating the public reporting of cam-



AP Wirephoto

MAURICE STANS
On the way to court

aign contributors. Before that date, their names were kept secret if they asked.

Stans took the witness stand in his own defense at

the criminal conspiracy trial in which he is a co-defendant with onetime U.S. Attorney General John N. Mitchell.

When Vesco made the six-figure donation, he was the target of a massive Securities and Exchange Commission frauds investigation. Mitchell and Stans are accused of seeking to impede this probe in exchange for the \$200,000.

Stans was still under direct examination when the trial was recessed for the night.

Stans said that at the March 8, 1972, meeting in which the money was pledged, it was he and not Vesco who raised the matter of the SEC investigation.

Stans testified:

"He (Vesco) said, 'Well that has been going on almost a year. We have been trying to resolve it. But the problem was that the SEC was harassing us and we haven't been able to sit down and settle it. Our law-

yers haven't been able to get to see the commissioners.'

"I said, 'Mr. Vesco, that should be no problem. Anybody having trouble with a government agency should be able to go to the head of that agency,' I said something to the effect that 'I hope you work out your SEC matter satisfactorily.'"

However, Stans said that because of the SEC matter, he put a hold on the pending Vesco contribution until he could "check him out" with Mitchell.

The liaison man for Vesco with Stans and Mitchell was Harry Sears, a political friend of Mitchell who had gone to work as a Vesco legal aide.

Regarding his meeting later with Mitchell, Stans testified:

"I told him I had met Vesco and talked with Sears, and Vesco was prepared to give a contribution of \$250,000. I said that I had discussed with Sears that Vesco had a matter pending be-

fore the SEC, that Sears had described himself as a good friend of yours, John Mitchell's.

"I said, 'I want your advice as to the propriety of taking the \$250,000.' I meant as a matter of moral correctness in whether I would ever be embarrassed publicly or privately by taking this contribution."

Stans testified that he and Mitchell discussed Sears's report that the SEC investigation was winding down and that Vesco's lawyers said he had done nothing wrong.

Stans went on: "He (Mitchell) said and I agreed, there was no reason under the circumstances that existed at the time that we should not accept the contribution."

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