

MAHEU SAYS NIXON ANGERED HUGHES

Rejection of Meetings on Nuclear Testing Alleged

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LOS ANGELES, May 31—In 1969 and 1970 Howard R. Hughes was offered and turned down four avenues for expressing directly to President Nixon his objection to nuclear weapons testing, Robert A. Maheu testified in Federal court here today.

Mr. Maheu, who has sued Mr. Hughes's companies for \$17.3-million defamation damages, said that Mr. Hughes had applied pressure in various ways to stop the testing but that the Nixon Administration had refused, as had the Johnson Administration.

Mr. Maheu said that Mr. Hughes had told him that President Nixon was willing to meet and explain the need for testing to him or that they could talk by telephone.

Or, Mr. Maheu continued, it was proposed that Mr. Hughes could meet with Henry A. Kissinger, now the Secretary of State.

Or, said Mr. Maheu, Mr. Kissinger would go to Las Vegas to Mr. Maheu's home where he could talk with Mr. Hughes by a super-secure telephone line used by Mr. Maheu and Mr. Hughes.

Angry Rejections Alleged

Mr. Hughes angrily rejected the proposals, Mr. Maheu said. Each of them provided only that the Administration's defense of bomb testing would be conveyed to Mr. Hughes, not that the talks be preliminary to a stopping of the tests.

In Washington, a White House spokesman said that there would be no immediate comment on the report.

Mr. Hughes in those years lived alone except for the presence of male secretaries in a penthouse apartment at the Desert Inn Hotel. Mr. Maheu lived in a \$500,000 mansion that Mr. Hughes built for him alongside the golf course behind the hotel. They never once met face to face. They talked by telephone, and the line to Mr. Maheu's house was buried beneath the golf course, which separated their abodes.

Mr. Maheu said that he noticed a deterioration in his relationships with Mr. Hughes in April or May, 1970, "when I refused an assignment at Key Biscayne." He did not repeat here what has been said in earlier testimony—that he was asked to approach Mr. Nixon's associates with an offer of money for the President in return for stopping the bomb tests. In December, 1970, Mr. Hughes dismissed Mr. Maheu.

Maheu Thefts Alleged

Earlier, Mr. Maheu was accused of stealing \$464,000 from Mr. Hughes by overbilling for the expenses of guard service he provided for Mr. Hughes's properties at Tucson, Ariz.

Mr. Maheu's explanation has been that the overbilling was known by Mr. Hughes who wanted it done in lieu of paying Mr. Maheu a higher salary than was customarily paid to Hughes executives.

Norbert Schlei, an attorney for the Hughes interests, produced a memorandum that Mr. Maheu said he wrote on May 3, 1970, to Mr. Hughes. In this memo, Mr. Maheu said that he had not overbilled on the Tucson guard operation.

Mr. Maheu explained that he had written this memo at Mr. Hughes's request because Mr. Hughes had found that other executives employed by him had become aware of the overbilling and were arguing that they were underpaid when compared with Mr. Maheu's income.

Mr. Maheu's cross-examination was concluded today.