

Defendants Cite Nixon, Agnew Cases

NEW ORLEANS — Federal prosecutors say the leniency accorded Richard Nixon and Spiro Agnew has given accused criminals a new argument in their pleas for freedom.

U.S. attorneys from across the country said that defense lawyers are raising the Nixon and Agnew cases more and more often as they urge juries to acquit their clients and petition judges for light sentences.

Some prosecutors suspect that juries on occasion have refused to convict a defendant because of the handling of the Nixon and Agnew cases. But most say there is no sure way to determine what factors influence a jury's verdict.

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The prosecutors assessed the impact of the scandals on their own cases in interviews during a four-day conference with Justice Department officials. Several asked not to be named.

The U.S. attorneys say they have arguments to counter a defense lawyer's plea for leniency based on President Ford's pardon of former President Nixon for any crimes he committed in office.

In Utah, said prosecutor C. Nelson Day of Salt Lake City, defense lawyers "many times refer to public figures or

well known political figures" during trials. "Our counterattack is that we're trying this case and the jury must make its decision on the facts in this case alone," Day said.

Calif Strike

LOS ANGELES—California's longest transit strike ended as the 1,800 Southern California Rapid Transit District resumed business.

Some 685,000 commuters in four Los Angeles-area counties were without bus service during the 10-week strike by drivers and mechanics.

Both groups gained about a 24 percent increase in wages and benefits in their settlements with the major bus service for Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

Hughes Ruling

LOS ANGELES—The First Amendment's guarantee of freedom of speech rules out punitive damages against Howard Hughes for saying a fired aide was "a no-good dishonest son of a bitch and he stole me blind," a federal judge has ruled.

But the judge said the the billionaire recluse, or his Summa Corp., may have to pay any actual damages suffered by Robert Maheu, who once ran the Hughes' Nevada business empire of hotels, casinos and land holdings.

Maheu is seeking \$5.5 million in actual damages and \$1 million for mental anguish caused by the comment Hughes made during a telephone news conference in 1972.

Kent Evidence

CLEVELAND, Ohio—The prosecution may use oral statements made by eight National Guardsmen charged in the Kent State University shootings, despite defense arguments that the men did not know the material could be used against them in criminal proceedings.

U.S. District Judge Frank J. Battisti ruled that oral statements made shortly after the May 4, 1970, shootings could be admitted as evidence. However, he ruled earlier that written statements from the Guardsmen could not be admitted.

Battisti said he would explain his ruling on Monday or Tuesday.

Nixon 'Worst'

SALT LAKE CITY—Historian-author Fawn M. Brodie says she believes historians will put former President Nixon "securely at the bottom of the list, as the worst of all our presidents."

But she said biographers or "psycho-historians" might be more sympathetic, looking to the roots of Mr. Nixon's character in evaluating his presidency.