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That \$200,000 Election Gift

LOS ANGELES — (AP) — Within weeks of the time Robert L. Vesco gave \$200,000 to President Nixon's re-election campaign, presidential aide John D. Ehrlichman promised to help the financier in a Lebanese business deal, the Los Angeles Times said today.

The Times quoted unidentified sources in New York as saying the promise was made in Washington in the spring of 1972, when Ehrlichman met with two close associates of Vesco, Gilbert Straub and Lawrence B. Richardson.

The sources said the financier's troubles with the Securities and Exchange Commission were discussed openly at the meeting in the Executive Office Building next to the White House.

\$224 Million

Since then, the SEC has charged Vesco, the employ-

er of President Nixon's 26 year old nephew, Donald A. Nixon Jr., in a civil suit with looting \$224 million from Investors Overseas Services, Ltd., a Geneva-based financial empire.

A campaign contribution of \$200,000 cash was returned to Vesco by the Nixon committee on Jan. 31, 1973, but the donation is being investigated by a federal grand jury for possible federal campaign law violations.

The Times said the 1972 meeting involved an appeal to Ehrlichman for help in improving Vesco's image in Lebanon so he could take over Intra Bank, one of the Middle East's largest.

The Times said Ehrlichman told the men he would call Robert Houghton, the second ranking diplomatic official in Beirut. But the newspaper said it is not known what action, if any, he took.

Publicity

"The purpose of the call would have been to have the

embassy give Vesco a good reference despite the bad publicity of the pending SEC investigation," the Times quoted one source as saying. "But the deal ultimately fell through because his reputation wasn't good enough for the management and board of the bank. The fire was never put out."

Reached by telephone in Lebanon late last night, Houghton denied receiving a call from Ehrlichman himself but left unclear whether he felt pressure through other channels, the Times said.

The Times added that the embassy became involved in Intra Bank when the bank declared bankruptcy in 1966 while owing \$21 million to Commodity Credit Corp., a U.S. government agency.

Straub was described by the Times as a friend of Donald Nixon's father and the President's older brother, Edward Nixon. One source said Straub was instrumental in introducing the President's nephew to Vesco, the newspaper said.