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Nixon Committee Is Fined For Concealing Vesco Gift

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WASHINGTON, June 20—President Nixon's re-election committee was found guilty and fined the maximum \$3,000 in Federal District Court here this morning for concealing a \$200,000 cash contribution from Robert L. Vesco, the fugitive financier.

The Vesco contribution, later returned, was delivered to the Nixon campaign in a brown suitcase full of \$100 bills on April 2, 1972, three days after a new Federal law required that contributions be reported to the Government and then disclosed to the public.

The Committee for the Re-election of the President has argued that the money was committed—and effectively received—in a spoken promise by Mr. Vesco to Maurice H. Stans, the committee's finance chairman, before the new law took effect on April 7.

But Judge George L. Hart Jr. ruled today that the actual delivery three days later constituted a reportable contribution under the new Federal Election Campaign act.

To the committee's contention that the Vesco gift fell into a "misty area" between old and new laws, Judge Hart commented, "I am having difficulty finding any doubt to shroud this in."

He fined the committee \$1,000 on each of three misdemeanor counts: for failures

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to report the contribution, to have an internal accounting of the money, and to keep appropriate records on it.

It was the same \$200,000 that led to the indictment in New York last month of Mr. Vesco, Mr. Stans and John N. Mitchell, the former Attorney General, on charges of conspiracy and obstruction of justice.

S.E.C. Inquiry

At the time Mr. Vesco made his contribution, he was the target of an investigation by the Securities and Exchange Commission for allegedly looting \$224-million from I.O.S., Ltd., and other branches of an international mutual fund empire.

As soon as the Vesco contribution was received, the Government has charged, Mr. Mitchell arranged a meeting between a Vesco lawyer and William J. Casey, then chairman of the S.E.C.

Thereafter, according to the New York indictment, Mr. Vesco's agents repeatedly called on high Administration officials, including the White House counsel at the time John W. Dean 3d, for assistance against the S.E.C. inquiry, which culminated nonetheless in a civil suit against Mr. Vesco.

Mr. Vesco, now believed living in Costa Rica, is threatening not to return to the United States for the criminal trial, which is scheduled to begin in

New York in September.

The conviction against the committee today was the second under the new election finance law. In January the Nixon campaign pleaded no contest and was fined \$8,000 for failing to report cash payments to G. Gordon Liddy, one of seven convicted Watergate conspirators.

Judge Hart said today that the committee would have 10 days to consider filing an appeal against his decision.