

The Washington Merry-Go-Round.

IRS Is Auditing Humphrey's Returns

By Jack Anderson

While former Vice President Spiro Agnew was being sentenced for income tax evasion, the Internal Revenue Service has been quietly auditing the returns of his predecessor, Sen. Hubert Humphrey (D-Minn.).

Inside sources say the IRS is curious about what happened to \$50,000 in cash, which a Howard Hughes emissary has sworn he delivered to Humphrey in 1968. Humphrey was then Vice President and the Democratic presidential nominee.

Robert Maheu, who then ran Hughes' Nevada hotel-casino empire, has testified that he handed over the cash to Humphrey in the vice presidential limousine outside Los Angeles' Century Plaza Hotel.

We spoke to Humphrey about the alleged transaction two years ago. He told us he had heard about a \$50,000 campaign contribution from Maheu but had no record that the money was ever received.

This is still Humphrey's recollection, a spokesman told us. Humphrey has no memory whatsoever of accepting \$50,000 from Maheu, said the spokesman. The tax probe, he added, was a "routine audit" of Humphrey's 1970, 1971, and 1972 returns. "The 1968 returns aren't even in-

cluded," he said. "Everything is in order."

Internal Revenue raised its eyebrows over Maheu's sworn testimony, say our sources, because of evidence Humphrey did favors for Hughes. If \$50,000 was paid for Humphrey's services, then the money should have been reported as income. It was Agnew's failure to pay taxes on a bribe that got him into trouble with the IRS.

During our investigation into the disappearance of the eccentric Hughes from Nevada in 1971, we got hold of some of his secret, hand-scrawled memos. Among them were instructions to Maheu to get Humphrey to stop nuclear testing in Nevada, because it was scaring away casino customers.

"Bob," Hughes directed Maheu, "there is one man who can accomplish our objectives through Johnson (the late President Lyndon Johnson) — and that man is H.H.H. Why don't we get word to him on a basis of secrecy that is really, really reliable that we will give him immediately full, unlimited support for his campaign to enter the White House if he will just take this one on for us?"

Hughes later wrote as if Humphrey's help had been secured. For example, the billionaire sought "an order from LBJ in-

spired by Humphries" to halt all Nevada testing or, at least, to gain a 90-day delay to allow more time to prepare a case against the tests.

"I concur completely," Hughes wrote Maheu on April 16, 1968, "with telling the V.P. that he is free to tell the people in Washington if they don't grant the 90-day delay, I am going to go public immediately."

What he meant by this was that he would release scientific opinions that the tests may have triggered an earthquake. There were also other references in the Hughes papers to using Humphrey, whose last name the billionaire always misspelled, in the campaign against nuclear testing.

Humphrey acknowledged to us that he had opposed the Nevada tests but insisted he had taken this position before the approval from the Hughes people.

Nixon Knew—Sources close to ex-Vice President Agnew have told us flatly that President Nixon was aware of Agnew's difficulties before the inauguration last January. Agnew notified the President, we are told, that he was being investigated for activities while Baltimore County executive and Maryland governor.

Not until April, however, did

either Agnew or Nixon realize how serious the charges against the Vice President had become. Then, one of Agnew's bagmen told the Vice President he would become a government witness unless Agnew could stop the widening probe by U. S. Attorney George Beall in Baltimore.

Agnew went to the White House again with his problem. Among the recommendations given him was that he hire as his attorney Judah Best, a genial but tough lawyer in the firm that White House special counsel Charles Colson was about to join.

The time sequence, which we have carefully confirmed, sheds doubt on the White House claim that Nixon wasn't told of Agnew's problems until shortly before the news reports began to appear in early August.

"If this had come up earlier, John Mitchell probably would have told Beall to forget it," said one source. "But by April, the Watergate was coming apart."

Thus President Nixon, by recommending Judah Best to be Agnew's attorney and appointing Elliot Richardson to head the Justice Department, was in the strange position of affecting both Agnew's defense and his prosecution.

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