

Nixon Offer to Meet Hughes Told

Los Angeles

President Nixon once offered to meet with Howard Hughes, or to send Henry A. Kissinger in his place, to discuss the federal government's atomic testing program in Nevada, according to a deposition filed in U.S. District Court.

The deposition, which surfaced yesterday, was filed last September by former Hughes aide Robert A. Maheu in connection with his

\$17.3 million libel suit against Hughes. Maheu contends he was libeled during a 1971 telephonic news conference when a voice purporting to be Hughes said Maheu "stole me blind."

Hughes was reported opposed to the government's testing of nuclear devices in the desert of southern Nevada and there were published reports the tests were the main reason for his leaving Las Vegas in November, 1970.

The deposition's reference to Mr. Nixon and Kissinger was made in connection with Maheu's attempts to fire Hughes' environmental adviser, John H. Meier, for alleged irresponsible actions. Maheu said the firing had been opposed by Hughes.

Maheu then said: "... On the one hand, President Nixon had offered to either see or converse on the telephone with Mr. Hughes in order to explain the posture of the

United States government vis-a-vis the atomic energy testing.

"Mr. Nixon offered to send Mr. Kissinger to Las Vegas to discuss the matter with Mr. Hughes, either in person or on the telephone ... but Mr. Meier kept saying that he was seeing Mr. Hughes regularly (and it) made it very difficult for us to explain to Dr. Kissinger and the President of the United States that they could not talk to Mr. Hughes."

There was nothing in the deposition to indicate that either Mr. Nixon or Kissinger had ever met with or talked to Hughes.

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