

Money Delivery Outlined

Vesco Aide Says Stans Didn't Count It

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Robert L. Vesco's associate stood, said the witness, "and he lifted the briefcase, put it on Mr. Stans' desk, and said, 'Mr. Stans, here is your currency.'"

"He opened the top of the briefcase, as I recall it, maybe just a couple of inches, and tipped it toward Mr. Stans."

"He said, 'I thought you would want to be sure that the money is here' in words to that effect. Do you want to count it?"

"Mr. Stans, as I recall it, said, 'No, that won't be necessary.'"

Thus Harry L. Sears today described, in minute detail, the secret passing of \$200,000 in \$100 bills to Maurice H. Stans, chairman of the Finance Committee to Re-elect the President.

Stans, former Secretary of Commerce, is on trial here with former Attorney General John N. Mitchell on charges of conspiracy, obstruction of justice and perjury in connection with those 2,000 \$100 bills of Vesco's.

Sears' testimony in U.S. District Court here today provided a rare view into the inner sanctum of campaign financing.

Sears, Vesco's paid agent and a well known New Jersey politician, had accompanied another Vesco associate, Laurence Richardson, to Washington with the money on April 10, 1972.

Vesco, as other Sears testimony revealed today, hoped the \$200,000 would buy him relief from an investigation of him and his companies by the Securities and Exchange Commission.

After Richardson had put the briefcase full of bills on Stans' desk, Sears testified, Richardson "closed the briefcase, put it back on the floor, alongside of where he was sitting, and he sat down, and Mr. Stans sat down . . ."

"Mr. Richardson then said, 'Mr. Vesco wants me to deliver you a message'—or 'give you a message. He'd like to get some help.'"

"Mr. Stans said, rather quickly, as I recall it, 'That's not—tell him that's not my department' or 'my bailiwick. That's John Mitchell's department.'"

At that point, Sears contends, he stepped in and told

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Stans that "what we brought here today is a political contribution. There's nothing else involved."

And he hustled Richardson out of Stans' office.

Within two hours of that meeting, Sears said, he was meeting with John Mitchell, then director of the Nixon campaign, telling him of the delivery of the money and asking again to meet with the chairman of the SEC, William J. Casey.

With Sears in his office, Sears testified, Mitchell talked to Casey and asked him to sit down with Sears to discuss Vesco's problems. By 4 p.m., Sears was in Casey's office doing just that, he said.

This started a series of meetings and telephone calls between Sears, on Vesco's payroll at a retainer of \$60,000 a year, Casey and with then-SEC general counsel G. Bradford Cook.

At one point, Sears testified, he asked Casey if he could bring Vesco to Washington to meet with the two of them, but Casey felt that would be inappropriate and suggested that Cook meet with the two of them, which he did.

At another point, Sears said today, he took Vesco with him to a meeting in Mitchell's office where, he says, he and Mitchell discussed the campaign in New Jersey. Sears ended up as the New Jersey campaign chairman.

"I introduced, or perhaps I should say perhaps re-introduced, Mr. Vesco to Mr. Mitchell," said Sears. "I said, 'John, this is Bob Vesco. You met him at my dinner' or words to that effect."

"They greeted each other."

"There was some small talk. I can't remember small talk for sure." Then, he said, Vesco sat there while they discussed the campaign.

Sears testified that after meeting with Casey and Cook he felt he had been making progress with Vesco's SEC problems, but that Vesco felt otherwise.

"He said, 'No, I just don't feel that we are getting anyplace and, frankly, Harry, I think you ought to go to see Maurice Stans . . .'"

Sears said he felt that was

the worst thing he could do, considering their attempts at the SEC.

"It would immediately be a red flag and an indication that you were using your contribution to the committee to get some help," Sears said he told Vesco.

"And he said, 'My God, I gave all that money,' and I said, 'Well, Bob, that's just the point . . . I feel it would be the worst thing in the world for you to do,' and I said, 'Besides, I don't think Maury has the clout to help you anyway.'"

At that point, Mitchell lawyer Peter E. Fleming Jr. interjected.

"C-l-o-u-t?" Fleming asked.

"C-l-o-u-t," Sears spelled out.

At one point in mid-1972, said Sears, SEC Chairman Casey called him to complain that Vesco had been traveling across Europe "dropping John Mitchell's name . . . and professing that he was a friend of John Mitchell's."

Sears said he called Mitchell to tell him that, saying he had admonished Vesco and "Vesco had denied doing it."

At yet another point today, Sears — who originally was indicted along with Vesco, Mitchell and Stans but who has now been given immunity for his testimony — said that Vesco tried to pressure Casey through Casey's former law partner, Leonard Hall, which Sears said he tried to discourage.

He said that when he told Mitchell about it, Mitchell said, "I can't think of anybody that has less clout than Len Hall."

Hall is a former chairman of the Republican National Committee.

In one scene that Sears sketched today, then New Jersey Gov. William J. Cahill had to cool his heels outside Stans' hotel room at the Doral Hotel in Miami Beach while Stans and Sears discussed Vesco.

Stans, said Sears, told him that "the SEC situation has gotten too hot to handle" and when he rejoined Cahill outside after talking with Stans, Sears said, "I was admonished by the governor. We had a golf date and he was pacing up and down in front of the elevator."

Sears also testified that Vesco gave him instructions

when he was about to go to a meeting at which Stans would be present by saying, "Well, when you go, tell that Stans to get that f - - - - - SEC off my back."