

Stans Begins His Defense, Denying Vesco Contribution Was for Favors

By Arthur Everett
Associated Press

NEW YORK, April 17—Former Commerce Secretary Maurice H. Stans testified today that he covered up a \$200,000 cash contribution to President Nixon's re-election campaign, solely to keep a pledge of secrecy to the donor, financier Robert L. Vesco.

At no time, Stans swore to a federal court jury of nine men and three women, did Vesco ever receive any kind of payoff in return for the secret contribution.

"That was behind the whole thing," said Stans, appearing in his own behalf. "Vesco made a contribution in private and privacy was his constitutional right under the law.

"I was doing my best to protect Robert Vesco and every

other contributor up to April 7."

A new law took effect April 7, 1972, mandating the public reporting of campaign contributors. Prior to that date, their names were kept secret if they asked.

Testifying with a sore throat, the immaculately dressed Stans took the witness stand in his own defense at the criminal conspiracy trial in which he is a codefendant with onetime Attorney General John N. Mitchell.

When Vesco made the six-figure donation, he was the target of a massive Securities and Exchange Commission fraud investigation. Mitchell and Stans are accused of seeking to impede this probe in exchange for the \$200,000. They are charged with conspiracy,

obstruction of justice and lying to the grand jury.

The graying Stans wore a dark suit with an American flag pin in the lapel, a white shirt and dark tie. He donned glasses when called upon to read exhibits. He appeared at ease, with his left leg crossed over his right knee. He kept his hands in his lap at times and gestured with them at other times.

Stans turned to face the jury and answered questions in an animated voice. It contrasted with the dry tone of Mitchell, who preceded him on the witness stand.

Stans still was under direct examination when the trial was recessed for the night. It resumes at 9:30 a.m. Thursday.

Stans said that at the March
See MITCHELL, A8, Col. 1

MITCHELL, From A1

8, 1972 meeting in which the money was pledged, it was he and not Vesco who raised the matter of the SEC investigation.

He testified:

"He said, 'Well, that has been going on almost a year. We have been trying to resolve it. But the problem was that the SEC was harassing us and we haven't been able to sit down and settle it. Our lawyers haven't been able to get to see the commissioners.'

"I said, 'Mr. Vesco, that should be no problem. Anybody having trouble with a government agency should be able to go to the head of that agency,' I said something to the effect that 'I hope you work out your SEC matter satisfactorily.' He said, 'I'm sure we will.'"

However, Stans said that because of the SEC matter he put a hold on the pending Vesco contribution until he could "check him out" with Mitchell.

Regarding his later meeting with Mitchell, Stans testified:

"I said, 'I want your advice as to the propriety of taking the \$250,000.' I meant as a matter of moral correctness in whether I would ever be embarrassed publicly or privately by taking this contribution."

Stans said he and Mitchell discussed the fact that Vesco's lawyers said he had done nothing wrong, and, "He (Mitchell) said, and I agreed, there was no reason under the circumstances that existed at that time that we should not accept a contribution.