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Court Backs Ex-Aide to Hughes In Dispute on Nevada Records

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—The Nevada Supreme Court has ruled, 3 to 2, that Robert A. Maheu, former chief of the Nevada operations of Howard R. Hughes, the billionaire industrialist, may retain certain records involving his employment.

Mr. Maheu had contended that part of the records in question belonged to him and were not the property of Mr. Hughes or the Hughes Tool Company.

The court held that a lower court's preliminary injunction ordering Mr. Maheu to return the records was "vague and ambiguous" and placed Mr. Maheu "in constant jeopardy if he guesses wrong as to which documents or records related directly or indirectly to the business of Hughes and the Hughes Tool Company."

For three years Mr. Maheu headed the Hughes business empire in this state, which included seven gambling clubs, an airport, a television station, thousands of mining claims and extensive property. On Dec. 4, 1970, the board of directors of Hughes Tool notified Mr. Maheu that he had been dismissed from his \$512,000-a-year job.

Mr. Maheu questioned whether the dismissal had come directly from Mr. Hughes and sued to retain his position. He also transported records from his offices to a warehouse in California.

Return of Data Ordered

District Judge Howard Babcock of Las Vegas later that month issued a preliminary injunction ordering Mr. Maheu to refrain from exercising any control over the businesses of Mr. Hughes in Nevada. It also directed him to return "all books, records, documents and communications of Hughes and the Hughes Tool Company which pertain directly or indirectly to the business operations."

Mr. Maheu appealed the order to the Nevada Supreme Court. The basic issue in contest was the return of the records. The high court let stand the rest of the injunction keeping Hughes Tool in command of the Nevada operations.

In the 1970 court battle, Mr. Maheu offered at least once



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Robert A. Maheu

to let officials of Hughes Tool inspect the records, but they refused and declined to make an inventory.

Chief Justice David Zenoff, who wrote the Supreme Court's majority opinion, said that Nevada law required that any injunction describe in reasonable detail the records involved. He said that the injunction of issue "allows Maheu no safeguard of keeping what may be rightfully his."

Since his dismissal, Mr. Maheu has filed a \$500,000 suit against Mr. Hughes and the tool company. That case is pending before a state court in Las Vegas.