

during their conversation, going so far as to dispute Eckstein's statements under oath on the matter. In his later letter to Sen. Thompson, Babbitt conceded invoking Ickes's name to Eckstein, but stated that he did so as an excuse to end his meeting with Eckstein. One could argue that the only way that Babbitt could avoid the admission that he had lied to McCain was to assert that in his letter to Sen. McCain he "regretfully dispute[d]" only the specific words that Eckstein attributed to the Secretary – even though Babbitt conceded lack of clear recollection about the conversation. Babbitt also knew that if the Committee concluded that he had purposefully misled McCain, it would lend credence to the argument that there was something untoward to conceal about the Hudson matter.⁸²⁵

⁸²⁵Even if he were confident that Interior's decision in the Hudson matter was free of any improper interference or corrupt influence, Babbitt may also have been motivated to avoid the Committee's scrutiny of Interior's handling of other land into trust applications by gaming tribes. As noted in the Review of Evidence, Section II.G.8.a., above, evidence suggests that by July 1995 Babbitt was aware of massive campaign contributions to the Democrats by another tribe – the Pequots – who had just won Interior approval in May 1995 for a land into trust acquisition to expand their casino parking lot. *See also* Sections II.G.7 and II.K.1.c., *supra*. The Pequots' 1994 contributions of \$500,000 to the DNC for distribution to state Democratic parties and \$250,000 to the DNC itself were made and reported repeatedly by the news media that year, during intense controversy and local opposition to the Pequot's efforts to increase the land supporting their Foxwoods Casino. During that application's pendency, Babbitt met directly with at least one lobbyist opposed to the Pequot acquisition and participated in conference calls with concerned local and federal officials, and Harold Ickes intervened in the matter at the request of the Pequots. Although there is no evidence of impropriety in the Pequot matter (which we have not investigated in detail), when he testified before the Senate Committee, Babbitt may well have been motivated to avoid spawning a further Indian casino inquiry, which may have resulted if Babbitt acknowledged that, in his meeting with Eckstein, Babbitt could have invoked Ickes's name and mentioned the half million dollar contributions of other tribes as evidence of the political might of gaming tribes generally, based upon Babbitt's own recent experience in the Pequot matter. This motivation would have been reinforced by the fact that there was litigation pending against Interior in October 1997 concerning both the Pequot and the Hudson application decisions. When confronted with this theory of motivation, Babbitt testified that he had no recollection that the Pequot matter or Pequot contributions were in any way a part of his thoughts and comments during his July 14 meeting with Eckstein. Babbitt G.J. Test. at 144-45, 170-74.