

VIP

An Insult Withdrawn

By Maxine Cheshire

Unless someone insults her again, singer Nancy Wilson will be sharing the spotlight at the Desert Ball here on Nov. 30 with blues star B. B. King.

Miss Wilson, invited several weeks ago to perform for the benefit of drought-stricken African countries, found herself caught up in a controversy that threatened to embarrass the State Department and even the White House before a truce was declared last week.

After accepting the invitation to sing, Miss Wilson was told that her talents were not needed. The behind-the-scenes flap that ensued took two weeks to straighten out.

King, who is currently touring Africa with Duke Ellington for Uncle Sam, had been asked first and at the recommendation of the State Department.

Although King and Miss Wilson are personal friends, King's local Washington representative, Wayne Smith, says he refused to let his client share billing with another star for the event. King had been promised "an exclusive," Smith insisted.

Under pressure from Smith, the committee staging the ball withdrew the invitation to Miss Wilson, saying it had been extended "without authorization."

The situation got so tense that the State Department's cultural affairs director, Mark B. Lewis, who had acted in an advisory capacity to the ball committee, went on record as saying he had "nothing to do" with the controversy.

Columnist Carl Rowan, a friend of Miss Wilson's who had been instrumental in recruiting her to sing for the benefit, intervened.

With First Lady Pat Nixon planning to attend the ball as its honorary chairman, the committee decided last week to try to avoid further embarrassment.

The co-chairman, Mrs. Winston Churchill Willoughby, announced that she has personally called Miss Wilson and reissued the invitation.

Miss Wilson has "graciously accepted," Mrs. Willoughby said last week.

But Miss Wilson's manager, Sparky Tovarest, reached by phone in New Orleans, indicates that there is still a possibility that she may not appear.

"They've insulted her," he said. "If she takes my

advice, she won't have anything to do with them."

Executive Energy

The fuel oil shortage is unlikely to affect Camp David. Two years ago, the Navy spent \$20,000 to install additional fuel oil storage capacity at the presidential retreat in the Catoctin Mountains of Maryland . . . meanwhile, the White House is planning to conserve electricity by eliminating those thousands of "bee" lights used on the Christmas trees inside and outside the Executive Mansion last year. The Yuletide decor plans, designed by Philadelphia horticulturist J. Lidden Pennock, are currently being "revised," a spokesman says.