

Contradictions in

By Morton Kondracke

WASHINGTON — (CST) — Republican officials in Washington and California began switching their stories yesterday about when they learned and communicated their knowledge of a \$400,000 contribution pledge from the

International Telephone & Telegraph Corp. to the Republican National Convention.

Two California state officials, Lt. Gov. Ed Reinecke and Commerce Director Edgar Gillenwaters, first told reporters that they informed former Attorney General

John N. Mitchell of the ITT offer in mid-May, 1971.

At that time, the Justice Department was negotiating settlement with ITT of the biggest antitrust suit in history.

However, after it became apparent that their story conflicted with a Mitchell

statement or last Wednesday denying knowledge in May of the ITT offer, Reinecke and Gillenwaters revised their accounts. They claimed they did not see Mitchell in May at all, but in September, after the ITT case was settled in July.

Meanwhile, Sen. Edward

Kleindienst Probe

M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) produced letters indicating that Attorney General Designate Richard G. Kleindienst and former Assistant Attorney General Richard W. McLaren were informed of the ITT offer in September, not in November or December, as they claimed.

Kleindienst, whose confirmation as Mitchell's successor is before the Senate, said he never saw a letter referring to the ITT offer that was sent to him on Sept. 21 by Reuben B. Robertson III, an associate of consumer advocate Ralph Nader.

However, an answer was

sent to Robertson by McLaren on Sept. 22 and contained a statement on the ITT offer that McLaren said he would not have written without first consulting Kleindienst.

The sudden emergence of conflicts in testimony served

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to deepen the mystery surrounding a memo by ITT lobbyist Dita D. Beard — published by columnist Jack Anderson — that ITT's \$400,000 commitment to the GOP convention had "gone a long way" toward obtaining a favorable settlement of the massive antitrust suit.

FBI Search

Mrs. Beard remained missing yesterday and was, according to Sen. James O. Eastland (D-Miss.) chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, the object of an FBI search.

According to the memo purportedly by Mrs. Beard, Mitchell was said to be "definitely helping" ITT. Mitchell was scheduled to testify before the committee yesterday, but his appearance was delayed until at least Tuesday.

Of the conflicts in stories, that between the California officials and Mitchell is the more serious. When Reinecke and Gillenwaters said they informed Mitchell of the ITT offer in mid-May, their story conflicted directly with Mitchell's.

Separate Interview

Reinecke and Gillenwaters told at least three reporters in separate interviews that they had told Mitchell about the ITT offer during a trip to Washington on May 16 or 17.

Reinecke told Robert Walters of the Washington Star that he informed Mitchell of the ITT offer "as part of the package we were offering to the party" to bring the GOP's 1972 convention to San Diego.

Gillenwaters told Brit Hume, an associate of Jack Anderson, that he and Reinecke had told Mitchell about the offer in May, according to Anderson's column.

Reinecke's Version

Yesterday Reinecke's office put out a statement retracting his and Gillenwaters' earlier version of

events — but the retraction also proved in conflict with previously known facts.

The statement said that "after checking and verifying our records, we learned that our meeting with Attorney General Mitchell was on April 26, 1971. At that time, we did not discuss the Republican convention because the idea had not developed at that date.

"On the May 16, 1971, trip to Washington, we did not meet with Mitchell, as I had previously reported.

"This error was brought about by my trying to recall the purpose and dates of several trips to Washington at a time when I was out of town and did not have access to my files or records.

"My discussion with (Mitchell) concerning the convention was . . . on Sept. 17, 1971. At no time did we discuss any commitment from ITT with reference to the Republican convention," but did discuss an offer with the Sheraton Hotel, an ITT subsidiary.

"We never discussed or thought of any connection between the Sheraton Hotel and ITT."

Challenges

These facts emerged to challenge the Reinecke retraction:

● In a June 16 interview in Sacramento, Reinecke told a reporter that during a trip to Washington in late April he discussed San Diego as a possible convention site with White House officials. Evidently, the convention idea had developed at that point.

● Reporters Walters and Shore contended that when they interviewed Reinecke he was in his Sacramento office with his records immediately at hand, and not "out of town."

● By Sept. 17, it was public knowledge that the Sheraton Corp. of America would be contributing \$400,000 to the convention, so that Mitchell did not require a private briefing to be so informed.



RESERVED SEAT FOR COMMITTEE HEARINGS

Star witness: Richard G. Kleindienst

—AP Photo