

Miss Woods Praises Mitchell and Stans

NYTimes MAR 19 1974

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The prosecution put Rose Mary Woods, President Nixon's personal secretary, on the witness stand in the Mitchell-Stans trial yesterday, and she promptly told the jury that each defendant was "a fine man."

Miss Woods's testimony was also a mixed blessing in other ways, as far as the prosecution was concerned. She was called as a witness to show that a list of contributors to President Nixon's re-election campaign—sent by Maurice H. Stans to the White House—did not include the name of Robert L. Vesco.

This was to support a contention by the prosecution that John N. Mitchell, the former Attorney General, and Mr. Stans, former Secretary of Commerce, were attempting to hide the fact of Mr. Vesco's contribution. It was \$200,000 in cash, which was described as the largest

cash contribution to the campaign.

Mr. Mitchell and Mr. Stans are accused of perjury, conspiracy and obstruction of justice for allegedly attempting to impede a Securities and Exchange Commission investigation of Mr. Vesco's financial affairs in return for the contribution. Mr. Vesco, who was also indicated, had fled the country.

But during cross-examination the defense succeeded in introducing into evidence a second list—of the very largest con-

tributors—that was also sent to the White House, and on it was Mr. Vesco's name. It was circled and had a question mark after it, but it was there alongside of such respectable Republicans as the Rockefeller brothers.

This list was of persons who might be invited to "stag" dinners at the White House or "state affairs" at the White House, Miss Woods said.

It was sent to the White House by Mr. Stans on Nov. 29, 1972, Miss Woods testified. This was two days after the S.E.C. formally started its investigation of Mr. Vesco's affairs.

Miss Woods, who has testified before the Senate Watergate committee, caused the first real stir in the courtroom in the 20 days of this trial. She appeared in a checkered red,

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white and blue suit and a white blouse with ruffles down the front. She carried a light tan attache case and was accompanied by her attorney, Charles S. Rhyne. Her auburn tinted hair was cut short, and she wore large earrings. There were noticeable "ahs" from the crowded courtroom when her name was called.

Asked by James Rayhill, a prosecutor, if she knew Mr. Mitchell she smiled broadly and replied, "I can identify him as a very fine man."

Asked if she was acquainted with Mr. Stans, she smiled broadly again, and said, "I certainly am—another fine man." She then smiled at the jurors.

After these preliminary identifications, the questioning turned to the lists. The first list was of contributors who had given to the campaign before April 7, 1972. On that date a new law went into effect requiring that subsequent contributors be listed, and any list turned over to the General Accounting Office.

Before that date, campaign contributions could be kept private. The defense has been contending that Mr. Vesco's \$200,000 contribution to Mr. Stans was handled by Mr. Stans in a routine matter, and that even though there was no legal obligation to make it public, there was no attempt to cover it up.

Contribution Issue

By introducing this first list, and having Miss Woods identify it, the Government was attempting to show that Mr. Vesco's contribution was not handled in a routine manner because his name was not on the 80-page list, which broke down contributors by state. At the time of the contribution—April 10, 1972 — Mr. Vesco lived in New Jersey.

That list also had on it the number 73 after certain names of contributors. The number, it was explained, was a code to indicate that the donor had made his contribution in cash.

"Who did you receive this from?" Mr. Rayhill asked the President's secretary.

"Secretary Stans," she answered. At the time Mr. Stans and Mr. Mitchell had left the Government to work full-time on Mr. Nixon's re-election campaign.

"Turning to New Jersey, Miss Woods, is there any listing of Robert Vesco?" Mr. Rayhill asked.

"No, there is not," she replied.

But, on cross-examination, the defense succeeded into getting introduced a second list, much smaller, of major contributors, which also was sent to the White House by Mr. Stans.

On this list were the names "Mr. and Mrs. Robert Vesco."

Despite the fact that Mr.

Vesco's name was on this list with a circle around it and a question mark next to it—the only one on the list with such markings—the mere fact that he was on it at all would tend to lend some credence to the defense's contention that the Vesco contribution was treated routinely.

So, at that point, the Government tried to get into the record the fact that Mr. Vesco had, in addition to the \$200,000 in cash, given a public contribution, by check, of \$50,000, and that this was the reason his name was on the second list. That contribution was made after the new campaign funding law went into effect on April 7, 1972. But Judge Lee P. Gaglardi, who is presiding, did not let that into the record, giving no reason for his ruling.

"Have you any recollection that Mr. and Mrs. Vesco were invited to dinner [at the White House]?" Mrs. Woods was asked.

"Mr. Vesco probably would have been included in a stag dinner," she answered. Miss Woods was only on the witness stand for about 30 minutes.

The April 7 date is an important one in this trial because as part of its charge that the defendants obstructed justice, the Government contends that the unlisted \$200,000 cash contribution, coming three days after that date, was illegal. The defense says that the contribution was arranged for before April 7, so therefore it was perfectly legal not to list it, and that it merely was delivered on April 10.

Miss Woods was preceeded on the stand by Hugh W. Sloan Jr., who had been treasurer of the Finance Committee to Reelect the President, which was headed by Mr. Stans.

He completed his second day on the stand by testifying under defense cross-examination that Mr. Stans version of the logging of the \$200,000 cash contribution was the same as his own.

"He did not ask you to lie about it?" he was asked.

"No sir," replied Mr. Sloan.

He testified that he had recorded Mr. Vesco's contribution under the initials "J.M.," for John Mitchell, on the orders of Mr. Stans, who told him to keep it listed that way "for the time being." Miss Woods was not asked later if the Vesco contribution was on her list under the initials "J.M."

After Miss Woods, the Government called Robert L. Higgins, counsel to Office of Federal Elections, General Accounting Office, who testified that the documents filed from the finance committee to the G.A.O.—which monitors campaign spending—did not list any contribution in the name of Robert Vesco from April 7 to May 31, 1972.