

Witness May Lose Clients

By Philip Greer

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NEW YORK, March 21—Harry L. Sears, a key figure in the Vesco Mitchell-Stans case, may face the loss of some governmental clients as a result of his involvement in the case.

In an effort to forestall moves to fire his firm as attorney for at least one northern New Jersey township, Sears this week asked for a bar association review of his role in the case and his testimony at the Mitchell-Stans trial in federal court here. The review could result in exoneration, reprimand, suspension or disbarment.

Up to now, it was learned, efforts to fire Sears' firm have met with little success, but they are continuing.

Sears, a former state senate majority leader, gubernatorial candidate and state chairman of President Nixon's 1972 reelection campaign, testified for seven days, but only after receiving the fullest possible immunity from prosecution in the case, in which he was also a defendant. He denied trying to "fix" a Securities and Exchange Commission investigation of financier Robert L. Vesco's affairs, but conceded that he used friendships with former Attorney General John N. Mitchell and former Commerce Secretary Maurice H. Stans to arrange a number of meetings with SEC officials to discuss the case.

Sears, along with another former Vesco associate, delivered a secret \$200,000 cash contribution to Stans for the Nixon campaign on April 10, 1972. The government has contended that the payment was in return for efforts by the former Attorney General and former Commerce Secretary to squelch the SEC investigation.

Sears, who has practiced law in Morris County in northern New Jersey for 25 years, is considered expert in zoning laws and other municipal problems. Roger J. Struble, mayor of Butler Township where Sears was born and raised, said the firm "is probably one of the most capable municipal firms around."

Struble, a Democrat, said there has been no effort to replace the Sears firm, but added that council members are "waiting and watching" the proceedings before the Morris County Bar Association.