Words about Watergate *Time 2/5/73*

Sir / The Jan. 29 TIME report on the Watergate affair draws upon the rankest form of unsubstantiated hearsay to attempt to connect Mr. Mitchell and me to the incident. That connection is totally false. No TIME reporter attempted to contact me or Mr. Mitchell. Responsible journalists invariably try to verify the accuracy of an allegation—certainly one this serious—before publication. Had I had the opportunity, I would have most emphatically denied the implication of the story. Mr. Mitchell has also emphatically denied its allegations.

Your article failed to include the fact that I gave sworn testimony to the Department of Justice last summer and sworn testimony in the course of civil litigation that I had no knowledge or involvement in the Watergate incident directly or indirectly.

Finally and most importantly, the charge in your story relating to Mr. Mitchell and myself is based entirely on one statement which you carry as an apparent direct, first-hand quotation from Mr. Hunt. Hunt has publicly denied that he made such a statement. It is not a first-hand quotation and even if it were first-hand, the statement would be hearsay. It is perhaps second-, third- or fourth-hand hearsay.

When a story like this is incorrect, the result is damaging to innocent individuals and, I would submit, damaging to public confidence in objective reporting by a free press.

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■ TIME *is happy to publish Mr. Colson's statement that he and Mr. Mitchell were not in any way implicated in the Watergate wiretapping case and regrets that it did not publish his prior public denials in the story. It is true that* TIME's *reporter did not speak to Mr. Colson or Mr. Mitchell prior to publication; however, in the past, he tried and failed numerous times to interview Mr. Colson about the Watergate affair. It is also true that Mr. Hunt was not personally quoted and that other sources were presumably quoting Mr. Hunt, as we believe was indicated in the context of the story.*