



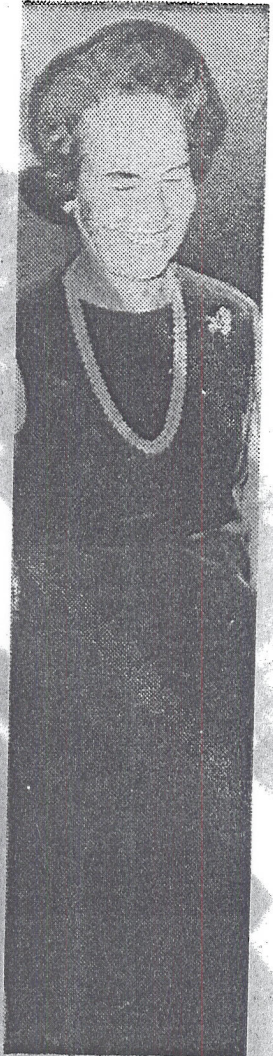
MRS. JOHN MITCHELL
"They all do it"



MRS. GEORGE ROMNEY
Cabinet wife at the wheel



JAMES HODGSON
Two cars at the ready



MRS. WM. ROGERS
Those endless parties

New Martha Furor: A Matter of Mileage

By Vera Glaser and
Malvina Stephenson

Washington

MARTHA Mitchell, the Attorney General's breezy blonde wife, has captured the attention of some economy-minded Congressmen.

Her comings and goings have set off a debate on who should be hauled by Uncle Sam at taxpayer's expense.

The lawmakers took notice recently when Martha was met at the airport by two tax-paid official cars and an unexpected TV camera.

Using her husband's chauffeured limousine for herself and her own government car for her luggage, Martha said, "All Cabinet wives have cars."

The declaration reminded Capitol Hill watchdogs that the nation's \$5.5 billion travel budget contains fat.

Only the State Department would confirm that Secretary William P. Rogers' wife makes heavy use of an official car. She is re-

quired at an endless round of diplomatic functions.

"The Justice Department may have a deal like that, but we don't," said Daniel Henkin, public affairs officer for Defense Secretary Melvin Laird. "I guarantee Mrs. Laird doesn't have an official car."

On Capitol Hill Representative John T. Myers (Rep-Ind.) said, "It may not be illegal for a Cabinet member to assign a car full-time to his wife, but it's bad judgment."

Myers, a member of the House Appropriations Committee, said he will work next year to close off Martha-type loopholes.

Cars and drivers are big-time status symbols in Washington and almost a necessity for high officials, given the scarcity of parking and the high crime rate.

Cabinet cars for the President and top diplomats are exempt from legal restrictions on "official use," but the Budget Bureau leaves to individual

conscience and good taste the question of car privileges for other wives.

Some request a car from the department's motor pool to attend an official or semi-official function.

Some are scrupulous about using personal cars for personal chores. Others have been noticed ducking into a store for a bit of shopping while the limousine waited.

In the Labor Department, Secretary James Hodgson has two cars assigned to him. The reason is "to keep one always available, and in running order. One of the cars is available to Mrs. Hodgson," according to a spokesman.

Other Cabinet wives who request pool cars from time to time are the Mmes. Rogers C. B. Morton, Elliot Richardson, George Romney and John Connally, wives respectively of the Secretaries of Interior, HEW, HUD and Treasury.

Mrs. Romney is a familiar figure around town in

her own white Rambler, as she markets and keeps personal appointments. On Sundays the Secretary releases his limousine and drives her to church in their own car.

According to the Justice Department, a black Mercury sedan and driver at Mrs. Mitchell's disposal around the clock costs taxpayers \$850 a year for the car and \$8300 for the driver's salary.