

Martha Mitchell on Election-Year 'Foolishness'

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By Dorothy McCardle

In the midst of the primary presidential campaigns, Martha Mitchell, wife of former Attorney General John Mitchell, has given thought to America's electoral system. She doesn't like it.

"Sometimes I'm downright ashamed of being an American when I think of the foolishness we go through every four years to elect a President," Mrs. Mitchell said the other day at a luncheon at the Japanese Embassy.

She branded the primaries as "a stupid waste of time." She would like "to scrap the political conventions."

She hopes that one day the President will be elected "by direct ballot of all the people."

"If we eliminated the primaries and the political conventions, we could save billions—not just millions—but billions of dollars in this country," she said.

Mrs. Mitchell was in town in between forays into the countryside to participate in fund-raising events for President Nixon. When she is in Washington, she keeps office hours at the headquarters for the Committee to Reelect the President.

She makes no speeches at her fund-raising appearances. She signs her name hundreds of times and chats person-to-person to all the people lined up to talk to her.

At the Japanese Embassy luncheon given by Mrs. Nobuhiko Ushiba, wife of the Ambassador, Mrs. Mitchell brought along a Japanese decoration given to her during World War II by an American flyer. She has never known what it was.

Mrs. Ushiba and other embassy wives rushed the pendant to embassy authorities who said it was the insignia of "a 4th class member of the Order of the Rising Sun." Mrs. Mitchell pinned it on her suit for the rest of the lunch.

The 30 women guests ate the Japanese food with wooden chopsticks from lacquered dishes. The menu included octopus, squid and bird's eggs among other delicacies.

Seven new ambassadors are either here or are coming which could mean a livening up of the scene.

The new Ambassador of France Jacques Morizet, who has been French ambassador in Washington as a soldier and teacher, is due here Thursday. He was a member of the United States Army during World War II and served in the Pacific post-war.