

Watergate (Cont.)

In a letter printed on this page today, an official of the Committee for the Re-election of the President makes the valid point that testimony in the Watergate trial did not establish that former Attorney General John N. Mitchell, campaign chairman, and former Secretary of Commerce Maurice H. Stans, finance chairman, "personally approved" any specific espionage activity against the Democratic party. A reading of the actual transcript of the trial shows that the testimony of Hugh W. Sloan Jr., former treasurer of the committee, was less conclusive than had first appeared to us on the basis of news accounts. The Times regrets the erroneous statement in our editorial of Feb. 1.

During the trial, Jeb Stuart Magruder, who as deputy director of the committee was Mr. Mitchell's top assistant, testified that he had approved cash payments totaling \$199,000 to G. Gordon Liddy, who used part of the money to finance the illegal espionage at the Watergate. Mr. Liddy has now been convicted for his part in the affair.

Mr. Sloan stated that as treasurer he had "no idea" for what purpose he had been authorized by Mr. Magruder to hand over the \$199,000 to Mr. Liddy. And he added, under the judge's questioning, that he had verified with Mr. Stans, and through him, with Mr. Mitchell, that Mr. Magruder was indeed authorized to approve the payments to Mr. Liddy.

Chief Judge John J. Sirica of the United States District Court, who presided at the trial, has expressed "great doubts" that Mr. Sloan "told us the entire truth," as he reiterated yesterday. We also share the judge's hope that the Senate will bring out the facts the trial never produced—thus revealing how high inside the Administration the chain of responsibility for this sordid chapter in American political history really stretched.