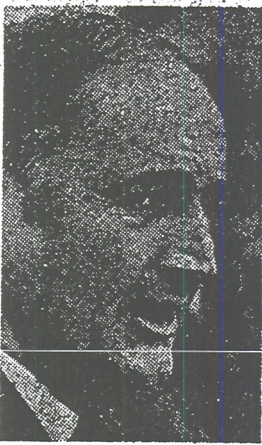


Mitchell Linked to Attempts To Settle Suit on Watergate



JOHN GARDNER
... pressing on

By George Lardner Jr. and Jules Witcover
Washington Post Staff Writers

Former Attorney General John N. Mitchell made an effort earlier this month to persuade Democratic officials to drop their lawsuit over the Watergate break-in of party headquarters.

Democratic National Chairman Robert S. Strauss yesterday confirmed Mitchell's entry into the negotiations which have been aimed at an out-of-court settlement of the Democrats' \$6.4 million complaint against the Committee to Re-Elect the President. As former head of the committee, Mitchell is listed as one of the de-

fendants in the suit for damages.

"We are not in accord," Strauss said yesterday, "but we have talked both in person and on the telephone within the last couple of weeks."

The Democratic chairman, however, said he had not had any conversations with Mitchell during the past week. Mitchell, who was at the White House last weekend while a campaign deputy was reportedly incriminating him in interviews with federal prosecu-

See SETTLE, A21, Col. 7

SETTLE, From A1

tors, could not be reached for comment.

The Republicans have reportedly offered \$525,000 for settlement of the suit, including \$25,000 for former Democratic National Committee official Spencer Oliver, whose telephone was tapped. Strauss confirmed this as a "rather precise, but not exactly" correct description of one of the proposals that have been made.

The presidential re-election committee's attempts to secure out-of-court settlements of civil lawsuits touching on the Watergate break-in and its possible financing appeared to be crumbling in any event.

In a second suit, officials of Common Cause, which is demanding disclosure of the Nixon campaign's contributions and expenditures last spring, said they intend to press their case despite an effort by the President's 1972 finance chairman, Maurice Stans, to secure settlement.

Common Cause Chairman John Gardner said after a meeting with Stans yesterday afternoon that Stans insisted on keeping secret the names of big contributors who wish to remain anonymous.

Democratic Chairman Strauss, meanwhile, has been facing stiff resistance from state Democratic Party chairmen to an out-of-court settlement of that lawsuit. He reiterated yesterday during an appearance at the National Press Club that he would not want to "impair in any way" a full

and complete disclosure of the Watergate scandal.

Oliver, who was fired by Strauss last week as executive director of the Democratic State Chairmen's Association, is known to be opposed to a negotiated settlement. He had no immediate comment, but said through a spokesman that he would hold a press conference at 2 p.m. today.

Strauss told newsmen at the Press Club, however, that Oliver's dismissal "had absolutely nothing to do with the Watergate whatsoever." He said he simply "wanted to rebuild a staff of my own, that I could work with and have confidence in."

Massachusetts Democratic Chairman Charles Flaherty, one of those present at a meeting last week when Strauss demanded Oliver's dismissal, said he had no quarrel with Strauss' desire for a loyal staff. But he predicted that most state Democratic chairmen, having lost their fight to keep Oliver, would vigorously oppose any effort to drop the lawsuit.

"We have a responsibility to make sure that every last fact and figure involved in the Watergate case be paraded before the American people," Flaherty said. "To cooperate in an attempt to negate that is, to me, beyond belief."

Both Strauss and former Democratic Party Chairman Lawrence F. O'Brien, who initiated the lawsuit last June, were believed to be amenable to a settlement of the case, which alleges that O'Brien's civil rights, and those of Democratic officials generally, were violated.

"It really depends on the confidence people have in the

4119173
in Post

facts ultimately seeing the light of day," DNC general counsel Sheldon S. Cohen said yesterday of the fears of some Democrats that the Senate's Watergate investigation will not be thorough enough. Cohen, who has had talks with Republican lawyers about a possible settlement, said he is proceeding for now on the assumption that the civil suit will come to trial.

Speaking for Common Cause, Gardner told reporters that nothing less than complete disclosure of the Nixon campaign's financing and spending could resolve that litigation without a full-dress trial.

Stans said it was Gardner's attitude on that score that made yesterday's meeting with the Common Cause chairman and his attorneys fruitless.

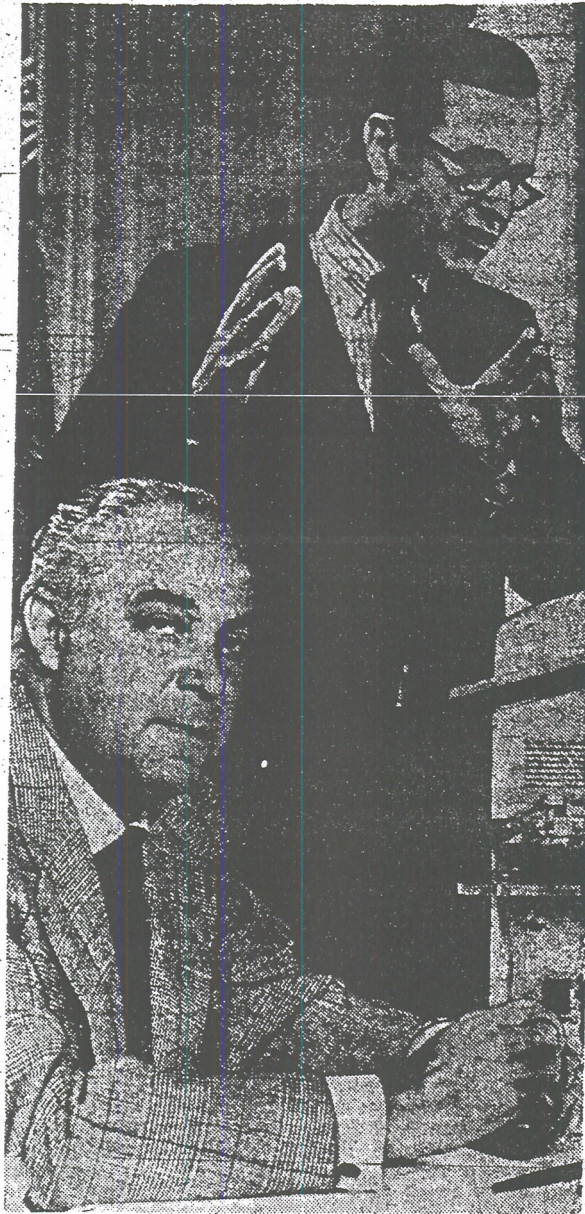
The Finance Committee to Re-Elect the President, which Common Cause is suing, "is not seeking to preserve anything for itself," Stans insisted afterward.

He said his committee was only trying to defend "the constitutional right" of Nixon campaign contributors during the period in question—from last March 10 to April 7, when a new campaign financing disclosure went into effect.

Declaring that there was no federal law requiring disclosure during that period, Stans said the finance committee was prepared to take the issue to the U.S. Supreme Court if necessary. "Those contributors have rights which we're not prepared to give away," Stans said.

Common Cause lawyer Mitchell Rogovin derided that notion and charged that Stans and the finance committee had themselves abandoned it last fall "to sweep this (suit) under the rug" until after the presidential election.

Rogovin was alluding to an agreement reached shortly before the election under which Common Cause agreed to postpone the suit in return for disclosure of Nixon campaign contributors between Jan. 1, 1971, and March 10, 1972, the date of the last report required under the old Corrupt Practices Act. Rogovin said Common Cause still has not been supplied with all the details promised in that agreement.



By Arthur Ellis—The Washington Post

Democratic National Chairman Robert Strauss (seated) and GOP National Chairman George Bush in a joint appearance before members of the National Press Club.

Asked to comment about President Nixon's announcement of "major developments" coming in the Watergate case, Stans said: "Well, they certainly don't involve me. I'm not involved in the Watergate." He said Mr. Nixon was to be "commended" for his efforts which "certainly are aimed at getting at the truth and getting at the responsible people."

Just as he was preparing to drive off with his attorneys, Stans was then asked whether he had approved the disbursement of \$199,000 to Watergate conspirator G. Gordon Liddy as alleged during Liddy's recent criminal trial by Hugh W. Sloan, the Nixon campaign treasurer at the time of the Watergate break-in.

"That's an insulting question," Stans replied, "and the answer is no."