

Mitchell Debunks Martha's Proposal

United Press

Washington

Former Attorney General John N. Mitchell said yesterday it was "ridiculous" for anybody to take seriously his wife Martha's suggestion that President Nixon resign because of the Watergate scandal.

Mitchell, in a statement issued through Mr. Nixon's re-election campaign committee here, also chided United Press International and one of its White House correspondents, Helen Thomas, for reporting comments Mrs. Mitchell made about the President in a telephone call Saturday night to Miss Thomas.

During the conversation, which Mrs. Mitchell initiated from her New York apartment and urged Miss Thomas to report quickly, she said: "Mr. President should resign immediately. I think he let the country down. It's going to take a hell of a lot to get him out . . . he's been compromised."

Asked why she thought Mr. Nixon should step down, Mrs. Mitchell replied: "I think in order to give credibility to the Republican party and credibility to the United States."

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Mitchell, who has been mentioned frequently in allegations of an effort to cover-up high-level administration involvement in the bugging of Democratic offices at the Watergate building, issued this statement:

"Martha's late night tele-

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phone calls have been good fun and games in the past. However, this is a serious issue. I'm surprised and disappointed that United Press International would take ad-

the current situation and treat it as a sensational public statement.

"I think that under all the circumstances, Martha is entitled to more consideration and courtesy than that, particularly from a reporter whom she had considered a personal friend.

"Any thought of the President resigning is ridiculous."

As she has in previous phone calls to UPI about Watergate, Mrs. Mitchell made clear she was speaking for quotation and was not calling on a personal basis. As far as was known it was the first time her husband had volunteered a comment on one of her statements.

Mrs. Mitchell also has spoken to the Associated Press and the New York Times about Watergate in recent weeks, but none of her statements was as blunt as her suggestion that the president should resign.

Mitchell resigned as attorney general in March, 1972, to become manager of Mr. Nixon's re-election campaign. Two weeks after the June 17 Watergate break-in he announced he was leaving the campaign to spend more time with his family.

In her call to Miss Thomas Saturday, Mrs. Mitchell said "there is nothing that Mr.

President didn't know about that my husband didn't know about" and "I don't think he (her husband) is going to get out of it."

Mrs. Mitchell first tried to reach Miss Thomas at the UPI Washington Bureau and then at home. She finally tracked her down in a restaurant in Madison, Wis., where Miss Thomas was addressing the local chapter of Women in Communications.

When Mrs. Mitchell emphasized that she wanted the story to be transmitted immediately, Miss Thomas

noted that it might not appear in some East Coast newspapers because of the lateness of the hour. Mrs. Mitchell said she understood and wanted the story published.

Mrs. Mitchell said she and her husband are "very close" and that she "got him into all this" by convincing him to support Mr. Nixon.

"Till my dying day, I'll scream that I changed him from a Democrat to a Republican. I changed him from saying 'Tricky Dick Nixon' into his love for him," she said.

"I wanted my husband to be a great attorney general. I thought we could make a contribution."

Mr. Nixon and Mitchell first met as law partners in New York after Mr. Nixon's unsuccessful bid for the California governorship in 1962.

Mrs. Mitchell called Miss Thomas two days after giving a sworn deposition in a \$6.4 million civil suit by the

Democratic party against the Watergate conspirators in New York. At that time, she said she had no actual access to any documents connected with the Watergate bugging, but that her woman's intuition told her "things weren't proper."

She told Miss Thomas that she had tried to call some friends in the administration through the White House switchboard Saturday, but that the operators refused to put her calls through.

"No one at the White House will allow me to speak to anyone," she said.

Mrs. Mitchell also repeated charges that she was harassed by the White House last year when she publicly demanded that her husband leave politics.

How about the present White House staff? "They are a bunch of chickens," she said.

