

Morton's Unusual Fund Bid for Mills

Washington

Interior Secretary Rogers C. B. Morton made an unusual personal appeal to Attorney General John Mitchell for money from an undisclosed presidential campaign fund to help finance Representative William O. Mills' (Rep-Md.) special election campaign in 1971.

Mills' death yesterday and the deaths of his chief financial campaign managers in an auto accident last year, have rendered virtually untraceable the reason for, and the destination of, the \$25,000 cash contribution from the finance committee to re-elect the President to the Mills campaign.

Morton said he made the appeal to Mitchell in early April, 1971, after discussing the financial problems of the Mills campaign with advisers to the Republican congressional candidate. Mills was running in a May 25, 1971, special election for the eastern shore seat to which

Morton had been elected six months earlier and he had vacated when he became secretary of the interior in January, 1971.

"We discussed how difficult it was to raise money almost right on top of my own campaign and I said I'd see what I could do nationally to get help," Morton said in an interview yesterday. Mills had been Morton's long time Capitol Hill aide and the two men were close personal friends.

"I told John Mitchell that any way the national finance committee could help would be a good thing to do," Morton recalled. "I told him I thought we could win there.

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Mitchell did not resign his post as attorney general until almost one year later to head the committee to re-elect the president.

Morton said Mitchell told him he would have to discuss the request with Commerce Secretary Maurice H. Stans, who later resigned to

become chairman of the re-election finance committee, and would also have to seek "other opinion" as well.

Mitchell made it clear at the time of their discussion that the money would be in the form of a loan and not a contribution by the finance committee, Morton said.

According to Mills' campaign consultant James Allison, however, the money was never returned or repaid by the Mills staff.

MONEY

Morton said he never saw the money during the time it was either in the hands of his executive assistant, Robert Hitt or an interior department secretary Mary Beall. He said he did not know where it ended up or what it was used for.

Mrs. Beall was unavailable for comment but earlier this week told reporters she had given the envelope with the money to Ken Rietz, then a partner in the campaign consulting firm of Allison, Treleaven and Rietz, which had been retained by the Mills organization.

Rietz, later youth director of the committee for the re-election of the President, resigned last month from a job at the Republican national committee after it was reported that he was linked with political espionage.

Rietz' partner James Allison said that Rietz delivered the envelope to Mills' campaign manager, Colonel James L. Webster.

GLOVER

Webster and James Glover, who was second in command of the Mills campaign's financial affairs at the time, were killed in an auto accident in February, 1972.

Allison called the \$25,000 offer "unusual" because it was delivered in the form of cash and not a check.

"This was certainly not the normal way to contribute," he said in an interview. "If someone came to me with \$25,000 in cash for a political contribution I'd tell them 'that's fine with me but it's going to be reported one way or the other'."

Allison said he was not aware of what the money was to be used for. "We thought it was going for campaign expenses but the only one who would really know is Colonel Webster," he said.

Webster, a retired Air Force colonel, handled campaign money and was responsible for its disbursement in the Mills organization, said Allison. He formerly served as an aide to Morton when Morton was in Congress.

Maryland law requires that any money received or spent in the state on behalf of a congressional candidate be reported to the state board of elections.

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