

Mitchell on Today

As Probe Resumes

Washington

John N. Mitchell, the former attorney general and one-time confidant of President Nixon, met with Senate investigators for four hours yesterday to outline testimony he will give when the Senate Watergate hearings resume today.

Neither Mitchell nor officials of the Senate panel would disclose the nature of the private testimony by the former attorney general, who directed Mr. Nixon's 1972 re-election campaign until he resigned abruptly 15 days after the Watergate breakin.

But Mitchell was said to be prepared to be the first in a series of Senate witnesses challenging the explosive charges by John W. Dean III, the former White House

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legal counsel, that the President was an active participant in the Watergate cover-up.

Another of the key witnesses scheduled to appear before the committee this month — John D. Ehrlichman, the President's former assistant for domestic matters — said in an interview published yesterday that much of the testimony Dean gave during five days last month was "contrived."

Ehrlichman was quoted in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer as having directly denied Dean's charge that the President had approved an offer of executive clemency to maintain silence by the original defendants in the Watergate conspiracy case.

According to Dean's testimony, the President acknowledged to him in January that he (Mr. Nixon) had

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discussed the clemency offer with both Ehrlichman and

Charles W. Colson, a former special counsel to the President.

WARNED

But Ehrlichman's account, in the interview, was that he had warned the President a year ago that, "sooner or later, you're going to be confronted with the suggestion by somebody that these fellows be given clemency."

Ehrlichman said that the President had agreed with him that the subject was "extremely dangerous" and therefore, should not be entertained by Mr. Nixon.

"I adhered to that," said Ehrlichman. "It was never discussed."

Mitchell was described by Dean and, earlier, by Jeb Stuart Magruder, who had been the deputy director of the re-election campaign, as a participant in three meetings early last year to plan a secret intelligence-gathering operation that culminated in the Watergate burglary. Dean also alleged that Mitchell had been deeply involved in the subsequent coverup effort.

DENIED

But officials close to the Senate committee said Mitchell denied having authorized the burglary and bugging of the Watergate headquarters of the Democratic party and rebutted the suggestion that he had knowledge of any involvement in the coverup by Mr. Nixon.

The Senate committee appeared to have abandoned — or at least shelved for a while — its public efforts to persuade the President to put in an appearance at the hearings. Mr. Nixon said in a letter to the committee chairman, Senator Sam J. Ervin (Dem-N.C.) that he would not appear formally or informally before the committee.

Senate Democratic leader Mike Mansfield endorsed the President's view yesterday, saying to newsmen that Mr. Nixon's was "the proper reaction at this time." He said it would be appropriate for the White House, the Senate panel and the nation

to "wait and see what facts are forthcoming" before deciding on the necessity of a Presidential response.

FUNDS

In another development, Representative Henry S. Reuss (Dem-Wis.) called for the Internal Revenue Service to seize unexpended campaign funds of the Committee for the Re-Election of the President.

Reuss, in a telegram to IRS Commissioner Donald C. Alexander, said it was possible that the campaign committee could be assessed \$5 million or more in income and gift tax liabilities.

Reuss said that the committee's assets were estimated to be \$4 million to \$5 million and that it was proper for the IRS to impose a "jeopardy assessment" against the committee.

New York Times