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SENATE COMMITTEE MEMBER HERMAN TALMADGE
He held up a paper during questioning of Mitchell

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Talmadge Scores Dramatic Point

Washington

In his examination of former Attorney General John N. Mitchell yesterday, Senator Herman Talmadge (Dem-Ga.) forcefully made the point that in withholding Watergate information from President Nixon Mitchell had perhaps done him and the country a disservice.

"One thing I can't understand, Mr. Mitchell," Talmadge said, "as I understand it, you have been probably closer associated with the president than probably any man. You were his law partner, probably his most trusted confidant and adviser. You had immediate access to the White House at any time, to the president's office, including a direct line. Is that a fair statement?"

Mitchell: It is extremely complimentary.

Talmadge: It is meant to be complimentary.

Mitchell: I think it is made a little higher than it might be.

Talmadge: Now, you have been in public office, in positions of high responsibility in government . . . to my mind, the first requirement of a subordinate and adviser and confidant in any capacity is absolute and implicit trust. If they see anything going wrong involving their superior that needs immediate corrective action, they report it instantly. When you found out all these crimes and conspiracies and coverup were being committed, why on earth didn't you walk into the president's office and tell him the truth?

Mitchell: It wasn't a question of telling him the truth. It was a question of not involving him at all so that he could go on through his campaign without being involved in this type of activity, and I am talking about the White House horrors particularly.

As I have testified this morning, I was sure that, knowing Richard Nixon, the President, as I do, he would just lower the boom on all of this matter and it would come back to hurt him and it would affect him in his re-election. And that is the basis upon which I made the decision . . . It may very well be that I was wrong, that it was a bad matter of judgment.

Talmadge: Am I to understand from your response that you placed the expediency of the next election above your responsibilities as an intimate to advise the President of the peril that surrounded him? Here was the deputy campaign director involved, here were his two closest associates in his office involved, all around him were people involved in crime, perjury, accessory after the fact, and you deliberately refused to tell him that? Would you state that the expediency of the election was more important than that?

Mitchell: Senator, I think you have put it exactly correct. In my mind, the re-election of Richard Nixon, compared to what was available on the other side, was so much more important that, yes, I would put it just that way."

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