

Friends Unready to Resolve Dispute

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Two friends cited by John N. Mitchell as witnesses to the last top-level talks on the Watergate bugging plan said today they were not yet prepared to resolve the dispute between Jeb Stuart Magruder's testimony that the raid was approved and Mr. Mitchell's insistence that he had vetoed it.

Frederick C. LaRue, a rich Mississippian who served as Mr. Mitchell's political aide de camp in the 1968 and 1972 campaigns, said he could not go beyond his statement last month that he personally disparaged the bugging plan at meetings in Key Biscayne, Fla., in March, 1972, and never heard it formally endorsed.

But neither LaRue, in a telephone interview from Jackson, Miss., nor his lawyer here was willing to say he had heard Mr. Mitchell explicitly disapprove the scheme to plant listening devices at the Democratic National Committee headquarters in the Watergate complex.

LaRue pleaded guilty June 27

to conspiracy charges in connection with the Watergate cover-up and agreed to help the Government prosecute others. He is expected to testify before the Senate Watergate committee early next week.

Comment by Flemming

The other man Mr. Mitchell mentioned in the Watergate hearings this morning, Harry S. Flemming, said this afternoon that he had been summoned to Florida about the time of the planning talks but that he had missed out on the bugging discussions entirely.

Mr. Flemming, once a patronage officer in the White House and now a businessman in Virginia, explained his absence from the key meetings, with amusement and gratitude, as a result of the chronic jealousy and jousting between himself and Mr. Magruder when they were junior officers of the Nixon re-election campaign.

He and Mr. Magruder had both been called from Washington to brief MMR. Mitchell on the campaign's progress in March, 1972, Mr. Flemming said. To his surprise, Mr. Magruder flew to Florida a day

early. "I gather now, he wanted to talk over his proposal without my being present," Mr. Flemming explained.

Central Episode

Mr. Flemming, 32 years old, and LaRue, 44, had worked with Mr. Mitchell in the 1968 campaign and were two of his most trusted lieutenants in 1972. Both men would be expected to give Mr. Mitchell every benefit in his current difficulties, yet apparently neither will be able to support him directly on this central episode in the Watergate story.

Mr. Magruder told the Senate committee on June 14 that Mr. Mitchell had made a "reluctant" but nonetheless clear decision at the Key Biscayne meeting to go ahead with the modified \$250,000 "Liddy plan" of campaign intelligence, including an illegal entry into the Democratic headquarters.

"Mr. Mitchell simply signed off on it," Mr. Magruder said, "in the sense of saying, 'okay, let's give him [G. Gordon Liddy a convicted conspirator] a quarter of a million dollars and let's see what he can come up with.'"