

Mitchell, Stans On Trial

New York

The oft - delayed trial of former cabinet officers John N. Mitchell and Maurice H. Stans gets under way in U.S. District Court here today and the witness list is stunning.

It includes the former counsel to the President, John W. Dean III; two former chairmen of the Securities and Exchange Commission and, possibly, the two defendants.

Mitchell and Stans are each charged with one count of conspiracy to obstruct justice, three counts of obstructing justice and six counts of making false statements to a grand jury. If convicted of all counts, each could receive 50 years in jail and \$85,000 in fines.

The trial, before Judge Lee P. Gagliardi, is expected to last from four to six weeks, and likely will begin with defense motions, then the choosing of a jury. Jury selection is expected to take about four days.

The choosing of jurors in the case is of key importance, particularly if there is later an appeal, since attorneys for Mitchell and Stans have insisted that publicity engendered by the Watergate revelations and these indictments preclude the two from receiving a fair trial in this media - minded jurisdiction.

Attorneys said that, once the jurors here have been chosen and sequestered, probably by February 27, more indictments can be expected to be filed in Washington in other aspects of the Watergate case.

Mitchell, onetime chairman of the Nixon re - election committee, and Stans, the former Secretary of Commerce and head of the committee's financing, were indicted last May 10, along with New Jersey politician Harry L. Sears and 38 - year



MAURICE H. STANS
Ex-Commerce secretary



JOHN N. MITCHELL
Former attorney general

- old financier Robert Vesco.

Sears' case has been severed from that of Mitchell and Stans, and he is due to be tried after the are. Vesco, who has not been seen in the United States in a year, is a fugitive.

The case centers on two basic happenings: Vesco's \$250,000 payment to President Nixon's 1972 campaign, and then investigation of Vesco and his companies by the Securities and Exchange Commission.

According to the indictment, Vesco wanted to get the SEC investigation stopped, and hired Sears — an old friend of Mitchell who ended up as chairman of the New Jersey Committee to Re - Elect the President — to get Mitchell's help, while Mitchell was still attorney general.

Vesco, the indictment alleges, met with Stans and offered to give half a million dollars to the Nixon campaign "with the intent of having" Stans, Mitchell and others "exert their influence on the SEC on behalf of Ves-

co" and his companies and associates.

At that meeting, purportedly on March 8, 1972, it was decided that \$500,000 — even given secretly under the campaign reporting laws then in effect for another month — might be too far out of line with Vesco's 1968 contribution (reportedly over \$100,000).

So, said the indictment, Vesco acceded "to Stan's re-

quest to give \$250,000 in cash before April 7, 1972."

Later, according to Sear's deposition in the SEC case, Vesco and his associates decided to give \$200,000 of the money secretly, and to give the other \$50,000 through normal contributing channels.

The \$200,000 in \$100 bills was carried to Washington on April 10 by Laurence B. Richardson Jr. a then-Vesco associate, and Sears, and handed to Stans.

Within hours, the government alleges, Mitchell arranged for Sears to discuss Vesco's SEC problem with William J. Casey, then chairman of the SEC.

The indictment also alleges that Mitchell later asked then-White House counsel John W. Dean III to intervene in the SEC case to prevent certain people from giving deposition less they reveal the secret \$200,000 payment.

Further, the government is trying to prove that Stans intervened with G. Bradford Cook, then general counsel of the SEC and later its chairman, to delete reference to the money in the SEC's case against Vesco, which was filed several weeks after the election.

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