

Trial of Mitchell and Stans Starts Here Today

By **ARNOLD H. LUBASCH**

Jury selection begins today in the trial of former Attorney General John N. Mitchell and former Commerce Secretary Maurice H. Stans.

Their trial on charges of conspiracy, obstruction of justice and perjury will open in Federal District Court here at 10 A.M. unless there is an unexpected postponement.

It will be the first trial of men who were leading figures in President Nixon's Administration and the first criminal case against former Cabinet members since the trials of two officials from the Harding Administration in the nineteen-twenties.

In the Mitchell-Stans case, the central charge is that the defendants used their influence to impede an investigation of Robert L. Vesco, a financier who secretly contributed \$200,000 in cash to Mr. Nixon's re-election campaign.

Mr. Mitchell and Mr. Stans, who headed the President's

campaign, are accused of having interfered with the Vesco investigation in return for the cash contribution and denied the intervention under oath.

Judge Lee P. Gagliardi, the presiding judge in the trial, will question veniremen in an effort to select an impartial jury.

Public Barred

During the selection procedure, the public will be barred from the courtroom and the press will be limited to a 10-member pool, so that there can be as much room as possible for the prospective jurors.

The courtroom can accommodate fewer than 100 jurors at a time, but 2,300 have been summoned this week as potential panels for the Mitchell-Stans case and other trials in the United States Courthouse at Foley Square.

It could take several days for Judge Gagliardi to select the 12 jurors and six alternates, who will be sequestered under the guard of Federal marshals for the entire trial.

After the jury selection, the prosecution and the defense are expected to devote more than a month to the testimony of witnesses, including former assistants from the White House and the President's 1972 campaign.

The prosecutors plan to call John W. Dean 3d, the President's dismissed counsel, and the defense lawyers may use White House tapes in cross-examining him.

The defense expects the prosecution to call Harry L. Sears, a New Jersey politician who is scheduled to go on trial later as the alleged go-between in Mr. Vesco's dealings with the Nixon Administration.

Vesco Absent

The charges that became known as the Vesco case will proceed without Mr. Vesco, who left the country before he was indicted and then blocked the Government's extradition efforts.

The investigation that Mr. Mitchell and Mr. Stans alleged-

ly obstructed in 1972 resulted in a complaint by the Securities and Exchange Commission that Mr. Vesco had looted \$224-million from mutual funds his corporation controlled.

Last May 10, the two former Cabinet officers were indicted with Mr. Vesco and Mr. Sears for their alleged scheme to obstruct the investigation by exerting influence on William J. Casey and G. Bradford Cook, the top S.E.C. officials at the time.

Mr. Mitchell and Mr. Stans, if convicted, could face up to five years in prison for each charge of conspiracy, obstruction of justice and perjury against them in the 16-count indictment.

The prosecutors are John R. Wing, James W. Rayhill, John A. Lowe and Kenneth R. Feinberg, who will face a defense team headed by Peter Fleming Jr. for Mr. Mitchell and Walter J. Bonner for Mr. Stans.