

A Quote That Was

To the Editor:

William Safire, in his March 4 column, "A Quote That Never Was," is delighted to find a written version of the Watergate hearings in which Mr. Haldeman's account of President Nixon's remarks ("The President said 'there is no problem in raising a million dollars, we can do that, but it would be wrong.'") is not enclosed in quotation marks. He then infers that the words "but it would be wrong" are not a direct quote from the President and might be just Mr. Haldeman's general impressions of what he heard, as he remembered tapes of the meeting three months after having listened to the tapes.

This kind of convenient misunderstanding was fortunately anticipated by Senator Baker, who followed up Mr. Haldeman's statement with questions "to test the accuracy of your recollection," stressing how much difference was made by the addition of the words "but it would be wrong" and asking "if, in fact, the tapes clearly show he said" those words. Mr. Haldeman was positive, had heard the tapes with his own ears and did not think there was any distortion in the quality of that portion of the tapes.

It seems either slovenly or mendacious of Mr. Safire to treat this as an issue of whether the words at issue are in quotation marks or not or whether Mr. Haldeman directly quotes or paraphrases the President, since Senator Baker's questioning and Mr. Haldeman's answers were included in Count Eight of the indictment.

PATRICIA HOLLANDER GROSS
Arlington, Mass., March 4, 1974
