

How Mitchell Says He Viewed Vesco Donation

New York

Under intensive cross-examination, former Attorney General John N. Mitchell testified yesterday it never occurred to him "in any form, shape or manner" that financier Robert Vesco was looking for something in return for a \$200,000 contribution to President Nixon's 1972 campaign.

Mitchell said he considered Vesco "just another American citizen who wanted to support a political candidate."

Mitchell acknowledged, however, that in 1972 he contacted William Casey, then chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission, about its probe of Vesco's activities. But Mitchell denied that action was improper.

"I disagree it would be improper," he told Assistant U.S. Attorney John R. Wing, who had cited a law forbidding government offices from representing persons under investigation by a federal agency.

"Didn't you think that the Casey treatment (of the Vesco matter) would be affected by the fact that you called?" Wing asked.

"I wouldn't flatter myself to that extent," Mitchell replied.

Wing asked Mitchell whether he knew that Vesco's contribution was aimed at quashing the SEC probe.

"Absolutely not, Mr. Wing, or the whole matter would have ended right here," Mitchell replied.

"It never occurred to you that Vesco was looking for something?" Wing asked.

"It never occurred to me in any form, shape or manner," Mitchell replied.

During four hours of persistent cross-examination, Mitchell appeared relaxed.

Mitchell, whose interrogation will continue today, is on trial with former Commerce Secretary Maurice Stans on charges of conspiracy, obstruction of justice and perjury. Mitchell and Stans are accused of trying to impede the SEC's investigation of Vesco in return for his contribution.

During morning questioning by his defense attorney, Mitchell swore that he is in-

nocent of any influence-peddling on behalf of Vesco.

Mitchell was asked at the close of direct questioning by his attorney:

"Are you guilty or not guilty?"

"Absolutely not guilty to any of those charges," Mitchell said.

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