



Department of Justice

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PRESS CONFERENCE

ATTORNEY GENERAL JOHN N. MITCHELL

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

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Mr. Mitchell: Well, ladies and gentlemen, the only thing I have to say is that I'm glad to be back in San Francisco. I am available for your questions.

Reporter: Mr. Attorney General, what is your reaction to the three bombings on the West Coast, and what is the Justice Department doing about it, or what can the Justice Department do about it?

Mr. Mitchell: The Justice Department, as in all of these cases, lends its expertise for investigation and technical assistance in connection with bombings that take place. We have, of course, before the Congress, a new statute that passed the House yesterday that provides us wider jurisdiction and, hopefully, after that legislation is enacted, we will have a broader jurisdiction where we can go into many of these bombings directly and not just have to wait and be of assistance to the local police.

Reporter: What is your personal reaction to the bombings?

Mr. Mitchell: My personal reaction to the bombings, like any other commission of crime, is that it is absolutely abhorrent. These people are psychopathic. They are out to destroy our institutions. There cannot possibly be this type of activity in the name of any cause, political or otherwise.

Reporter: Don't you feel that your incursion into these matters is stepping over what really are state boundaries?

Mr. Mitchell: No, I do not, and I would say, as I have said so many times before, the last thing in the world that we need is a federal police force. I believe in these areas that the investigative expertise of the Federal Bureau of Investigation is necessary in order that we can bring to bear on these problems the entire law enforcement availability of federal, state and local agencies.

Reporter: Do you think this incident will provide impetus to the Congress, and the bills will now be more likely to pass?

Mr. Mitchell: Well, I think we've had enough bombings in the last year. To give you a statistic, in the last school year of 69-70, we've had 261 bombings and arsons on the campuses alone, let alone those that have taken place off the campus. I would not believe that Congress would need any further incentive to pass the legislation than what already exists.

Reporter: Is this a nationwide conspiracy in your view?

Mr. Mitchell: You have to define nationwide conspiracy in order to discuss that subject matter. If you mean all of the radical anarchist groups have combined together to carry out this activity, the answer is no. But if you define conspiracy on a national basis to include a group that has a national format, a national undertaking, yes, then it would be a national conspiracy within that group.

Reporter: On a political note, sir, are you here to campaign for Senator George Murphy?

Mr. Mitchell: I'm here to do a number of things. Number one is to meet with the U.S. Attorneys from California over some of our problems out here, and number two, to make sure that the next Congress is representative of what the people want and what I need in order to carry out my functions as the Attorney General, and that is passage of the requisite legislation. In order to do so in the Congress we need people like George Murphy in the Congress.

Reporter: Then to answer my question, you are campaigning for George Murphy.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, I don't know what you mean by campaigning.

Reporter: Well, you're going to appear at a dinner tonight...

Mr. Mitchell: I'm going to appear at a dinner tonight, along with Senator Murphy and Governor Reagan and I presume some other supporters of Senator Murphy.

Reporter: Do you and the President think that Senator Murphy is in serious trouble from his opponent?

Mr. Mitchell: Well, you'll have to ask the President what he thinks. As far as I'm concerned, I haven't the faintest idea anymore than what I read in the newspapers. I am not deeply involved in politics and all I would know about the Murphy race out here is what I read in the newspapers.

Reporter: Did Mr. Murphy ask you to come out here to campaign for him?

Mr. Mitchell: I am not quite sure whether it was the Senator or some of the other people. I would believe that probably the right answer is that some of the supporters for Senator Murphy in the state extended the invitation.

Reporter: Are you going to appear in other states like Ohio and Texas on behalf of senatorial candidates?

Mr. Mitchell: I have no plans to.

Reporter: So California is the only place you are going to appear on behalf of senatorial candidates?

Mr. Mitchell: I wouldn't say that that would be necessarily so, but as of the moment I have no other plans.

Reporter: What reason were you given for the invitation? Were you told that Senator Murphy is in trouble and would need your help?

Mr. Mitchell: No, they did not, not whatsoever.

Reporter: What reason was given?

Mr. Mitchell: There wasn't any reason for an invitation.

Reporter: Mr. Attorney General, you said you were going to meet with the federal attorney out here on problems of this area.

Mr. Mitchell: No, I said the United States Attorneys in California.

Reporter: One of the problems, I assume, is the draft resistance movement in the Bay area which apparently is larger here than anywhere else in the nation. What can you tell them about that? What direction can you point them in?

Mr. Mitchell: Well, that is one of the subject matters that we will be discussing tomorrow and we will exchange our views on it and hopefully be able to improve the situation that exists in this area.

Reporter: How?

Mr. Mitchell: That is the purpose of the conference, to determine that.

Reporter: Do you feel that the federal judges have been too lenient in the San Francisco area?

Mr. Mitchell: I don't like to characterize the activities of any federal judge, but it may be that the procedures that they've used out here could come under review, and we could have some suggestions.

Reporter: Could you give us your views of the Scranton Commission Report?

Mr. Mitchell: Well, it would take me a long time to do it in depth, but I will try to do it as briefly as possible. There are some provisions of the Scranton Commission Report that I would agree with and others I would disagree with.. Just so I am not put in a position of waffling

on the question, I would point out that the one item I strongly disagree with is their conclusion that the governmental structure has caused the disturbances on the campuses. I don't agree with that, and I further don't agree with the concept that government, whether it be federal, state or local, is going to be the instrumentality for resolving the problem. It is my opinion that the problem can be better resolved by the family, and by the church and by the schools and colleges, where the problems really arise.

Reporter: Would you term it as pabulum for permissiveness?

Mr. Mitchell: That's your term and. . .

Reporter: It's not my term, Mr. Attorney General.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, it's the one you brought up this morning. I haven't used it.

Reporter: How do you feel about the Commission's remarks on National Guard and law enforcement officers being armed on campuses? Do you feel the National Guard troops should be armed with ammunition in their guns on college campuses?

Mr. Mitchell: Well, this depends on the circumstances, as any right thinking law enforcement officer would tell you. There are circumstances, obviously, where the law enforcement agency has to have the requisite force. It may not be necessary at all times to have your guns loaded, but anybody who is sent in to a civil disturbance of severe magnitude ought to have the requisite force in order to carry out his appointed function.

Reporter: What part of the report did you agree with?

Mr. Mitchell: Well, this, as I say, would get me into a very long discussion. Some of the things I would agree with are that the administrators in the colleges have been lax, they've been unprepared, they haven't cooperated with local law enforcement or the courts and I could go on and on, but I don't think that would be particularly productive.

Reporter: Do you think it is particularly useful to have these kind of commissions to accept some things, disagree with other things? Did they tell you anything you didn't know or that you weren't counting on?

Mr. Mitchell: I think commissions are worthwhile if they function properly, and I mean if they carry out the mission assigned to them, whether it be under congressional resolutions or Presidential directive. If they carry out the assigned mission, I think it is always important to have that additional piece of information or the additional findings brought before the American public so they can evaluate them, weigh them and make their own determination.

Reporter: Are you suggesting that this particular commission did not function?

Mr. Mitchell: No, I'm not suggesting that at all. I'm just suggesting that I disagree with some of their conclusions and agree with others.

Reporter: What about the Commission on Pornography?

Mr. Mitchell: Well, that's an entirely different subject matter. I disagree with the way they functioned. I disagree with their conclusions, and I do not believe that they carried out the mission that was given to them by Congress.

Reporter: Why?

Mr. Mitchell: Because of the way they went about their undertakings, the way that they staffed their commission, and the way that their report was written without sufficient scientific basis.

Reporter: Sir, the Black Panthers say that your Department is deliberately harassing them. A case in point would be the arrest yesterday of a newspaper reporter who was held in contempt of court because she would not answer questions from a federal grand jury investigation. Yet Earl Caldwell was not sent to jail. Can you shed some light on this Black Panther investigation?

Mr. Mitchell: Let me point out that we are not harassing anybody. We don't approach these organizations as organizations. We approach our obligations under the federal statutes to investigate and perhaps prosecute those who have violated the federal law. With respect to this young lady out here, this was entirely a determination of the judge. He determined that she should testify. She refused to testify and, accordingly, he held her in contempt.

Reporter: Mr. Attorney General, when you first assumed the post of Attorney General, you asked that private enterprise become more involved in law and order. Do you think private enterprise has responded to that call?

Mr. Mitchell: They have in some areas and it's an on-going process. There are many more activities being undertaken by the private sector now, both outside of the governmental relationship, within governmental relationship, such as the national volunteer action group, and we have an on-going program with the American Bar Association where we are structuring this on a more professional basis with the professional organizations like the American Bar or the International Association of the Chiefs of Police and others in this field who will provide the expertise for programs that can be carried out by civic action groups.

Reporter: Are you satisfied with the response from the private sector?

Mr. Mitchell: Nobody is ever satisfied with the response on the war on crime.

Reporter: Do you have any comment on Vice President Agnew's attack on Senator Goodell?

Mr. Mitchell: Well, I wouldn't characterize it as an attack. I would characterize it as a response. The press seems to forget that Senator Goodell has been discussing, in terms that may not be very flattering, the Vice President for some time, and I think the Vice President, in his statements on the Senator from New York, put it in a little better perspective than it had been when only Senator Goodell was talking.

Reporter: You are a voter of New York State, are you not, sir?

Mr. Mitchell: No sir.

Reporter: Do you share Vice President Agnew's apparent view that Senator Goodell should not be re-elected and that Mr. Buckley should be elected in his place?

Mr. Mitchell: I don't know that Vice President Agnew has said that.

Reporter: Do you feel that way?

Mr. Mitchell: If you want my opinion on the subject matter, I think that it is very important to this Administration and to the President that the Senate be organized by the Republican Party with the majority of Republican senators in the Senate, and whoever can be elected who will vote with the Republicans to organize that body, I'm for his election.

Reporter: Which of those two is more likely to do that, Senator Goodell or Mr. Buckley?

Mr. Mitchell: The one that is likely to get elected.

Reporter: Which one is that in your opinion?

Mr. Mitchell: I haven't the faintest idea.

Reporter: Mr. Attorney General, on a more personal note, can you tell us a little bit of the story behind the FBI agent ironing your wife's dress that was in Life Magazine two weeks ago?

Mr. Mitchell: I don't know how you fellows can extend these stories to that extent. There was no such incident, none whatsoever, and I'm sure if there had been, there would have been an ex-FBI agent. (laughter)

Reporter: Is your wife with you today?

Mr. Mitchell: Not at the moment, but she will be here.

Reporter: Did she fly out with you, I understand she is afraid to fly? Did she fly to California?

Mr. Mitchell: Yes, she flew to California.

Reporter: Mr. Mitchell, have you heard about sales of the Martha Mitchell doll? By the way, does the doll do anything?

Mr. Mitchell: Well, that is one of the objections I have to the so-called Martha Mitchell doll. The one that I saw didn't talk. (laughter)

Reporter: Is that good or bad?

Mr. Mitchell: Well, in my case I think it is a horrible travesty of a representation. You see the Martha Mitchell watch is something that is different. You know, the Spiro T. Agnew watch, you have to look at it to tell the time, but the Martha Mitchell watch, it tells you what time it is.

Reporter: How do you feel about being upstaged by your wife?

Mr. Mitchell: Well, I don't know if that is the case, but if I have been and if I am being, I just think it's great.

Reporter: Can you tell us of what information you have that makes you reject the Scranton Commission suggestion that the government has some responsibility for campus violence?

Mr. Mitchell: Yes, 18 months, 20 months now of experience in this field.