

## Gibberish, mishmash and bosh

Watching the Senate Watergate hearings this summer must have made Christian fundamentalists and college administrators feel good. Religious fanatics could revel in the frequent quoting of the King James version of the Bible, while administrators could sigh with relief, since testimony proved they are not the only persons in the country who butcher the English language.

Thousands of Americans were glued to the television for a week listening to John Dean's verbal carnage. They heard him use phrases like "point in time," "out in front," "off the top," and "viable option." It won't be known whether Dean was telling the truth unless President Nixon's tapes are released, but one thing is certain: he didn't speak plainly.

When he spoke of "off the top," it is believed he meant "as I remember." When he said "at that point in time," he must have meant "then." When he referred to the President being kept "out in front," he didn't mean at the front lines, such as when the infantry is "out in front" in a battle, he meant "out from under" the Watergate mess and its implications. The "viable options" he discussed are "plans that might work."

It's no surprise that this sort of speech would come from a member of the Nixon administration. It is the same gang that coined phrases like "pacification" for "war," "inoperable statements" for "lies" and "benevolent incapacitator" for "tear gas." They even tried to redefine the word "poverty" in hopes of making the American poor less numerous.

Is it any wonder there was such a bungling of the Watergate break-in? The burglars probably couldn't understand what the masterminds were telling them.

It seems the administration has devised a language which only it can understand fully. When one thinks

of the corruption and scandal which has characterized Nixon's Southern California Mafia, it becomes obvious why they don't want to speak plainly: the truth is a dangerous thing—politically. How could Nixon have spoken of "peace with honor" when he discussed the Indochina conflict? He would have had to say, "We are killing thousands of Indochinese daily with our bombs." Yes, the Nixon administration has a reason not to use plain language.

So it is on the UNL campus. Only here, a place where precision in thought and speech ought to be common, there is daily abuse of the language. Academia has had its jargon for years and it seems to have become more common since students began clamoring for their rights. When the Board of Regents is presented with a reasonable but politically dangerous proposal, they assure students they are "open to meaningful dialogue." What does that mean? Does it mean they will come to the campus and seek out student's opinions on issues? Hardly. When the board rejects a student proposal, some administrator always seems ready to say students have had a taste of frustration while playing a role "in the decision-making process." But who made the decision? Not students.

It is time students demanded that administrators and the Board of Regents stop referring to student rights as "privileges." It is time they quizzed a campus official when he promises them "meaningful dialogue." It is time they rejected talk of UNL's academic excellence when we have only academic mediocrity.

If there is to be progress on this campus, if there is to be progress nationally, students must demand that officials speak so they can be understood.

Michael (O.J.) Nelson



Dial "M" for Mitchell

## Mitchell confronted with indictments, Martha

By Keith Landgren

The Mitchells are in the news again, and they are terrific. They are at their best under pressure, and the pressure on the Mitchells is at its peak. Their story, though comic, shows signs of turning tragic at any moment.

Martha's problem is John. He doesn't talk, he won't go to parties, he just isn't fun anymore. So she may leave him, as she has been quoted as saying, or she may not.

Martha certainly is being difficult and perhaps unreasonable. In the first place she exaggerates. John must go to a party once in a while. And anyway, is it fair to expect a man in Mitchell's position to be the sunny face and dashing figure he once was?

John's most immediate trouble is a trial in New York. With former Secretary of Commerce Maurice Stans, Mitchell is under indictment for violation of campaign finance laws. Fugitive financier Robert Vesco, who must be a lot like Howard Hughes, is involved in the same case. Mitchell and Stans could go to jail. Vesco could, too, if anyone could find him.

Mitchell hasn't been at all lucky in the Watergate case. Rumors and inconsistencies keep appearing

around him. His former assistant at the Committee to Re-elect the President, Jeb Stuart Magruder, has admitted to perjury in the case. Also, when people wonder who gave final high level approval to G. Gordon Liddy in connection with the burglary, John Mitchell is often mentioned, though no one seems able to agree on his role.

Of course, with all the conflicting stories about Watergate, truth may have to be defined as anything two people agree on. At any moment a Fred LaRue or a Robert Mardian could revise his story, plunging Mitchell into deeper trouble.

Each time the ITT issue surfaces, Mitchell seems to be involved. The most damaging evidence is one of those memos of which the Nixon people are so fond, this one from former special counsel Charles W. Colson. It suggests Mitchell was guilty of perjury. John Mitchell could go to jail in the ITT case.

The New York indictment and the ITT affair tend to be discussed under the heading "Watergate." Because Mitchell has been involved in so many aspects of the case, the term "scapegoat" acquires new importance. It probably is safe to say the Nixon

administration is not morally above blaming Mitchell for everything. At least no one has been seen rushing to his defense.

To Mitchell's legal problems, the administration has added another injury, a direct stab at his work as attorney general. Elliot Richardson, by no means a Nixon man but nonetheless the new attorney general, has re-opened the Kent State investigation. Mitchell made a lot of friends by closing the investigation of the four killings, but at the cost of creating a horde of enemies. Now his enemies have the upper hand, and, unfortunately, his friends are nowhere to be seen.

There is no justification, as yet, for any massive outpouring of grief on Mitchell's behalf. He isn't really a nice man, even on his best days. It has been a long time since he said a polite word to the press, and he wasn't the most charismatic figure on the tube during the Watergate hearings.

Still, it doesn't seem wrong to sympathize a little with Mitchell. For all the legal battles raging over what he said he didn't do, there is still a possibility of his being tried for what he did. And besides, with all his other troubles, it can't be much fun to be married to Martha.