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Nixon Urges Quick Trials, Cautions on Prejudgment

By JOHN HERBERS
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 1 — concerning Watergate.” President Nixon expressed the hope today that trials arising out of the new Watergate indictments “will move quickly to a just conclusion.” He also cautioned the nation to remember that the accused are presumed innocent unless proved guilty.

“The indictments indicate the judicial process is finally moving toward resolution of the matter,” Gerald L. Warren, the White House deputy press secretary, said in a statement approved by Mr. Nixon. The statement, read to newsmen, added:

“It is the President’s hope that the trials will move quickly to a just conclusion. The President is confident that all Americans will join him in recognizing that those indicted are presumed innocent unless proof of guilt is established in the courts.”

The statement also declared that the President had “always maintained that the judicial system is the proper forum for the resolution of the questions

Two of the seven men accused in today’s indictment, Charles W. Colson and Kenneth W. Parkinson, issued personal statements of innocence and predicted their eventual exoneration on the charges. The other five relied on their attorneys to issue brief statements of innocence. [Details, Page 16.]

Word of the Watergate indictments reached the Oval Office today via the news tickers, and the President—busy with policy meetings, ceremony and entertaining of Congressmen—reacted with his brief formal statement a short time later.

Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr. and Ronald L. Ziegler, the President’s chief assistants, informed Mr. Nixon of the charges against his former high associates just as the President was ending a meeting with his economic and energy advisers and was preparing to welcome the Mayor of Meridian, Miss., Tom Stuart, who had gotten 20,000 names on a petition in

Continued on Page 17, Column 3

Continued From Page 1, Col. 6

the President’s defense. In keeping with the mood of normalcy and unconcern that the White House seemed to be consciously conveying, Mr. Warren did not read the statement until pressed by reporters and until after he had announced that Marion H. Smoak of Aiken, S.C., had been appointed chief of protocol for the White House and that Royston C. Hughes of Edgewater, Md., would be Assistant Secretary of the Interior for program development and budget.

Speech by Son-in-Law

A few minutes later, David Eisenhower, the President’s son-in-law, greeted 500 Young Republicans in the East Room with an inspirational speech that made no mention of the court action. In response to reporters’ questions, he said the defendants “have been accused for a year, so it is nothing new,” adding “Their guilt or innocence will be established at the trial.”

Elsewhere in the White House, there was a hushed atmosphere as the Presidential staff, long accustomed to bad news, talked quietly in the halls and in the offices. Squirrels darted about green lawns bathed in sunshine. Television cameras set up for the evening broadcasts were the only visual sign that the men who had wielded great power here just a year ago—H. R. Haldeman, John D. Ehrlichman and five others—now stood officially accused of covering up the 1972 Watergate scandal.

Today’s activities were in keeping with the President’s efforts of the last few weeks to show that he is governing

the country unperturbed by the unfolding Watergate charges.

Last night, when it was known the indictments would be handed up today, Mr. Nixon had as dinner guests 30 or so members of Congress and their wives. Afterwards they viewed a movie, “The Sting,” a current box-office favorite about some charming crooks in Chicago in the nineteen-thirties.

Tonight, another dinner was scheduled for a similar group of Senators and Representatives—most of them friendly to the President—and the movie was “Friendly Persuasion,” a nineteen-fifties film about a Quaker family during the Civil War.

Mr. Stuart, the Meridian Mayor, was the last in a long list of mostly obscure people about the country who had been invited to visit the President after they had run newspaper advertisements or circulated petitions supporting Mr. Nixon against impeachment. The President also met with members of the Reserve Officers Association.

Mr. Nixon, however, did not pose for pictures, as he frequently does with such groups. His spokesmen declined to discuss the President’s mood as he learned of the indictments.

Mr. Warren would not respond to questions about how the President or anyone else in the White House felt about the perjury indictment against Mr. Haldeman, which disputed both Mr. Haldeman’s testimony to the Senate Watergate committee and the President’s statement at an Aug. 22, 1973, news conference that Mr. Nixon had said on March 21, 1973, that to supply hush money for the Watergate burglars would be wrong.

Mr. Warren did say that Leon



Associated Press

H. R. Haldeman talking to newsmen at his home in Newport Beach, Calif., after learning of grand-jury action

Jaworski, the special prosecutor, did not inform Mr. Nixon of the indictments and that the news came to the White House as it did elsewhere in Washington, on the Teletype machines. Nor was the President informed of what might be in the sealed grand jury report given to Judge John J. Sirica.

Mr. Warren would not say whether Mr. Nixon still considered Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman "two of the finest public servants I have ever known," a statement he made on their resignations last April 30 and reaffirmed twice in press conferences since.

By this time, Mr. Warren, appearing a little irritated by the questions, said only, "I have given you the statement."

Dash Feels White House Won't Interfere in Trials

PORTLAND, Ore., March 2 (AP) — Samuel Dash, chief counsel for the Senate Watergate Committee, said today that he was confident there would be no White House interference in trials or sentencing of seven former top Presidential aides indicted on obstruction of justice charges.

"With the whole world looking, I believe the trials will go forward and justice will be done," Mr. Dash told a news conference.

Mr. Dash refused to make a direct comment on the charges against the seven, saying the matter "is so delicate and so important that I don't feel it would be appropriate for professional for me to comment."

Mr. Dash was in Portland for a scheduled address to an alumni meeting of the Northwestern School of Law at Lewis and Clark College.