

Jail Term Cited Before It Was Set

Panel Probes Tape Mystery

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The House Judiciary Committee yesterday directed its staff attorneys to investigate a mysterious reference in a White House transcript of a supposed March 22, 1973, conversation which quotes President Nixon as apparently commenting on an event before it occurred.

Special counsel John Doar said after a committee session yesterday that he will seek to learn whether there was any way the President could have known in advance what sentence would be given to convicted Water-

gate conspirator G. Gordon Liddy.

The transcript, turned over to the committee Thursday by White House special counsel James D. St. Clair is from the recording of a conversation between Mr. Nixon and his then-chief of staff, H. R. Haldeman. The discrepancy occurs after Haldeman brings up the name of Liddy.

"Liddy is enjoying—Liddy's in jail—he didn't stay out," Haldeman said. "He just said I want to start serving my term. And he's at Danbury general prison and thoroughly enjoying it. It's a little strange."

Replied the President: "That, uh, judge gave him 35 years."

It was not until the following day, March 23, that Liddy was sentenced by Judge John J. Sirica. However, he received a sentence of six years and eight months. It was Liddy's fellow conspirator, E. Howard Hunt, Jr., who the same day was sentenced to 35 years.

This discrepancy angered Democratic members of the committee. Rep. George Danielson of California said it was "confirmation that the cover-up, which began

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Speakers and is still going on.

Based on Fish's remarks, it is considered likely that the session was well attended.

"I was almost 15 was a very serious matter," Fish said. "The in-attendance you have to have the benefits of the committee."

He was one of four House members who spent the entire day at the hearing. First, Saturday, 18 of the Republican members either failed to appear or left before 11 a.m. throughout the day. Among them: William S. Coats of Maine, David W. Bonior of Indiana, Alexander H. Hodge of Maryland and Bush the only Republican among the committee's 17 GOP congressmen in attendance.

John W. Deane III, who was then White House counsel, reported Hunt's "backhand" demands to the President at a meeting in the Oval Office on the morning of March 21, 1973. "I told Mr. Nixon exactly what this was to my time line" and "you better damn well get that done." Told by Deane that Hunt ought to be given some denial anyway," the President responded, "Well, for Christ's sake, get it."

The White House lawyer, however, said that Mr. Nixon was often just making the role of devil's advocate in the March 21 discussion and "sometimes merely thinking out loud."

Although \$75,000 was delivered to Hunt's lawyer last night, the White House once again contended that Deane had already set the payment in motion before his meet-

ing with the President and that Mr. Nixon's remarks were inconsequential.

The unexpected Republican absenteeism was seen by some Democrats as a sign of partisan bias. Rep. Don Edwards (D-Calif.) said he regretted the poor attendance because the Saturday session was "by far the most important we ever had" since it gave the members an opportunity to ask questions.

Republicans who did attend minimized the GOP absenteeism. Fish said that many Republicans face a tough election year and chose to campaign instead of going to committee.

Those members who did attend not only asked many questions but also made some criticisms of Deane and authority counsel Albert Jenner.

Hogan complained that the summary volume of evidence presented to the committee on Friday contained several inaccuracies. He said that on one occasion the President is quoted as having said, "In politics, everybody buys, everybody else." Hogan said that the President was merely quoting Sen. Dan Goldwater (R-Ariz.) when he made the remark.

Hogan said Deane gave a very strong presentation, particularly in the areas of the election and on some points where the Commission gave a strong lead case.

Some Republicans stated and the majority of the House.

The House will report on the matter in a bill on the 15th. The House will also be holding a hearing on the matter, which is expected to be held on the 15th.

with unauthorized national security leaks.

That's the whole reason that set up the plumbers," McElroy said.

Jenner, talking outside the committee rooms, had some criticism of his own for White House press secretary Donald E. Ziegler who on Friday described the committee proceedings as "a kangaroo court."

"He's a PR man," said Jenner. "What does he know? He's never been here. He's seen nothing."

Deane declined to comment on Ziegler's remarks, telling reporters: "You can judge that for yourselves."

Staff lawyers spent most of the day leading the committee through a 306-page volume summarizing up the impeachment evidence against the President. The evidence is divided into four categories: Watergate, abuse of presidential powers, refusal of the President to comply with subpoenas from the House Judiciary Committee and willful tax evasion.

Several Republican members who are considered possible impeachment votes on other issues have expressed doubts about the strength of the tax evasion charge.

During the presentation yesterday, Jenner also expressed his doubts, saying that the tax issue "hadn't risen to the level of an impeachable offense."

Some observers in the House Judiciary Committee session said that members of the panel were impressed with the presentation of staff attorney Richard Gates who presented the Watergate evidence and Bernard Kussman, who went over the evidence surrounding the

White House defiance of committee subpoenas.

McElroy said that the committee had issued eight subpoenas for 147 conversations. 98 of them dealt with Watergate plus three requests from White House files, news, transcripts and records from the president's diary. He said the tapes the committee has ordered were those that have already been turned over to the Watergate special prosecutor.

McElroy called the evidence supporting the committee impeachment articles "a very impressive section" and hinted, as he has before, that he may be prepared to vote for impeachment or the issue.

Deane, a former Indiana prosecutor and public defender, who has never been regarded as a pro-impeachment vote, also seemed impressed by Deane's presentation, which he termed "computer professional."

"I don't escape being swayed by him," he added.

The committee will hear Monday from Deane, Congressman (R-Iowa) who is expected to emphasize on behalf of the GOP minority the case against impeachment.