

A Nixon Disclosure Raises New Queries

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WASHINGTON, March 7—President Nixon's statement last night that he learned last March 21 that hush money had been paid to the Watergate burglars raised new questions today about his actions after learning of the cover-up.

Federal law requires that knowledge of the commission of a felony be reported to the appropriate authorities, according to legal experts. Mr. Nixon did not report the statement by John W. Dean 3d, then White House counsel; to Federal prosecutors who were then investigating the case but ordered his own aides — who are now

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Nixon's Knowledge of Payment Of Hush Money Raises Queries

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charged in the cover-up—to find out the facts.

Mr. Nixon made the disclosure in the course of explaining on national television his part in the White House meeting of March 21 with Mr. Dean and H. R. Haldeman, then White House chief of staff.

Mr. Dean, the President said, "told me that payments had been made to the defendants for the purpose of keeping them quiet, not simply for their defense." Previously, he had said only in a general way that he learned in the March 21 meeting of the White House cover-up of the burglary.

Today, in the daily White House news briefing, Gerald L. Warren, deputy press secretary, was asked why the President had not made the fact public earlier and whether Mr. Nixon might have been in violation of Federal law for not reporting Mr. Dean's statement to Federal prosecutors.

Mr. Warren, as he usually does, declined to expand on what Mr. Nixon said in his news conference.

Legal experts noted that Title 18, Section 4 of the Federal Criminal Code, entitled Misprision of Felony, says:

"Whoever, having knowledge of the actual commission of a felony recognizable by a court of the United States, conceals and does not as soon as possible make known the same to some judge or other person in civil or military authority under the United States, shall be fined not more than \$500 or imprisoned not more than three years, or both."

These experts say that this law has been the subject of various interpretations by the courts, and there are questions

as to whether it would apply to the President, who is the chief civil authority in the country. Mr. Nixon said last night that he chose to order his own investigation.

Ordered Own Inquiry

In his news conference last night, Mr. Nixon said that in the March 21 meeting he branded as "wrong" any attempt to continue the cover-up by paying blackmail or granting Executive clemency to the defendants. Asked why he had not immediately notified the authorities of the violations of law, Mr. Nixon said, "I felt it was my responsibility to conduct my own investigation with all the assistance I could get from those who could provide information before moving to what would be a proper way of getting this story out to the country."

He said that he had ordered Mr. Dean to write a full report on what had happened, and when Mr. Dean balked he asked another aide, John D. Ehrlichman, to conduct an investigation.

On April 17, Mr. Nixon, making his first public comment on what he had learned, said that there had been "major developments" in the case. He disclosed that he had met with the then Attorney General, Richard G. Kleindienst, and Assistant Attorney General Henry Peterson "to review the facts."

Then on April 30, he said in a television appearance that after the March 21 meeting he had "personally assumed the responsibility for coordinating intensive new inquiries into the matter, and I personally ordered those conducting the investigations to get all the facts and to report them directly to me, right here in this office."