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It's Haldeman's Turn To Talk

Reuter
NEW YORK—Former White House Chief of Staff H. R. (Bob) Haldeman has broken his long silence on the Watergate scandal in a book considered so "hot" that its publishers are treating it as one executive put it, "like literary plutonium."

According to executives at the book's publishing house, Times Books, security men guarded each stage of the production process to make certain there were no leaks and only those who absolutely must could see the book.

Instead of using computers to set the type, the publishers used "hot" type and melted it down every day. Executives drove to the printer in the middle of the night and stayed until the proofs were made; Book of the Month club judges were given only one night to read the book. (They chose it as a major selection.) Even the book's promoters were not permitted to read the book in advance, the publisher said.

Meanwhile, top executives in New York publishing are predicting—sight unseen—that Haldeman's book, "The Ends of Power," will become the number one best seller in the United States when it is published Feb. 27.

(Times Books president Thomas Lipscomb said yesterday the first printing would be 275,000 copies.)

Booksellers are ordering thousands of copies of the book even though not a word of it has been leaked or reviewed.

In the book, according to the publisher, the imprisoned Haldeman says what was in the celebrated 18½-minute White House tape that was erased.

He claims the publisher reveals the identity of "deep throat," the major source for reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein's Watergate expose; tells when his former mentor, President Nixon, learned about the June 1972 break-in at Democratic National Headquarters in Washington's Watergate complex; tells what Nixon's reaction was, how much he knew and when he knew it.

When Haldeman first proposed a book, he had been a man committed to silence. In four years his only interviews on Watergate, with Mike Wallace of CBS television, revealed almost nothing. Because CBS reportedly paid Haldeman \$100,000 for the interviews and received little in re-

turn, book publishers were reluctant to buy Haldeman's book.

But Times Books, which is subsidiary of the New York Times newspaper, took the chance. Lipscomb then began what associates in his firm call "an evolutionary process" in which the former White House chief of staff dramatically changed his outlook. Haldeman's loyalty to Nixon crumbled. It fell apart as he prepared to enter Lumpoc Prison in California for a term that will see him freed next April. As he prepared to go to jail, his ex-boss took part in his now-famous interviews with British television personality David Frost. The interviews destroyed Haldeman's loyalty.

After the Nixon-Frost interviews were aired, Haldeman said, "I feel now that I have to challenge President Nixon's explanation of the cover-up. I have made a decision to put aside a book I have been working on for the past several years and move ahead full steam on the personal inside story of Watergate.

First word of Haldeman's book is expected to come on February 20, when Newsweek Magazine begins the first of a two-part condensation.