

Explanation Seen On Nixon Remarks

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3/18/74

President Nixon flew to Chicago last night for a question-and-answer session today in which he is expected to try to clear up contradictory statements he has made on a key Watergate issue.

The President's appearance before the Executives' Club will be broadcast live at 2 p.m. over the three major television networks and on many radio stations.

A White House spokesman said that Mr. Nixon may use the occasion to explain why he said last August that former White House counsel John W. Dean III told him money was paid to Watergate defendants for attorneys' fees and family support but this month said he was told the payments were "for the purpose of keeping them (the defendants) quiet."

Mr. Nixon appeared to be embarked on a major campaign to win public support.

In addition to the Chicago appearance, he will fly to Nashville Saturday to attend the Grand Ol' Opry and to Houston Tuesday for a question-and-answer session with the National Association of Broadcasters.

After the March 6 news conference in which Mr. Nixon said that in their March 21, 1973, meeting Dean told him money was being raised to silence Watergate defendants, White House spokesman have said a full explanation of the apparent contradiction would be made "all at one time."

In a prepared statement last Aug. 15, the President said, "I was only told that the money had been used for attorneys' fees and family support, not that it had been paid to pro-

hibit silence from the recipients."

In an interview with ABC's Tom Jarriel, presidential counsel James D. St. Clair said Wednesday the President may have misspoken in the press conference.

St. Clair said that simply because information has been given "does not constitute proof of the fact."

"Even an indictment of a grand jury alleging any such payments, for example, clearly is not proof of that fact. This has to await a trial where the defendants have a right to call witnesses and cross-examine witnesses and the like."

St. Clair argued that "to presume the existence of a fact at this stage seems to me to be premature. It has not yet been established, beyond mere allegation, what those payments were or the nature of them."

When Jarriel asked if the President misspoke in the news conference, St. Clair replied: "To the extent that it apparently has been so construed, I would say probably he did."

St. Clair also said in his interview with Jarriel that sections have been cut out or deleted from some papers in a White House file.

A few documents in a particular file, which he did not identify, "were found to be very obviously cut," St. Clair said.

The deletions were immediately brought to Watergate Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski's attention. Copies were found of at least one of the documents in other files and presented to Jaworski, St. Clair said.

"We are still looking for

other copies, if they exist, of some of these other documents," St. Clair said.

"Whatever was done and whoever did it had done it some time prior to May of last year," St. Clair said, explaining that since then all documents have been "under strict surveillance of the . . . Secret Service."

Asked if it were not logical to assume that since some papers were doctored, the presidential tapes also were doctored, St. Clair replied:

"Well, that is a, I think, really unfair comparison. Anything is possible, of course. But these papers were not doctored in any surreptitious way; they were simply sections of them cut out."

The President plans to return to Washington following his meeting at the Executives' Club. He will leave Washington again Saturday afternoon to fly to Nashville for the performance of the Grand Ol' Opry.

Mrs. Nixon, who has attended presidential inaugural ceremonies this week in Venezuela and Brazil, will meet the President in Nashville and return to Washington with him late Saturday.