

3 Top Nixon Aides, Richardson Will President Accepts

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President Richard M. Nixon accepted the resignations yesterday of his chief White House advisers, H. R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman, along with Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst.

He also announced that he had fired his counsel, John W. Dean III, who was by the ironies of the political process a casualty of the very scandal the President had charged him to investigate.

Last night, in a televised report to the nation in which he said he took full responsibility for the actions of his subordinates, President Nixon held open the possibility of appointing a special prosecutor to supervise the investigation.

The dramatic news of the dismantling of the White House command staff that served Mr. Nixon through his first four years in the presidency was the most devastating impact that the Watergate scandal has yet made on the administration.

The President immediately set into motion a major re-

shuffling of top administration personnel to fill the slots of the Watergate casualties. Defense Secretary Elliott L. Richardson was appointed to replace Kleindienst and to take over responsibility for "uncovering the whole truth" about the Watergate scandal.

As temporary successor to Dean, the President chose his special consultant, Leonard Garment. Mr. Nixon said Garment "will represent the White House in all matters relating to the Watergate investigation and will report directly to me."

Last night Gordon Strachan, whose name has been linked to the Watergate case, resigned as general counsel to the United States Information Agency. The USIA said the former aide to Haldeman resigned "after learning that persons with whom he had worked closely at the White House had submitted their resignations. . . ."

The immediate reaction to yesterday's White House announcement was a mixture of relief, especially among congressional Republicans, at the prospect of internal housecleaning. But there was also some dismay at the

Kleindienst Out; Conduct New Probe; Full Responsibility

President's failure to appoint a special prosecutor for the Watergate inquiry.

Senate Republican Leader Hugh Scott (Pa.), in a characteristic flourish of rhetoric, proclaimed that "a lack of grace in power has led to a fall from grace. This rotten vine of Watergate has produced poisonous fruit, and all nourished by it should be cast out of the Garden of Eden."

House Minority Leader Gerald Ford (R-Mich.) called the resignations "a necessary first step by the White House in clearing the air on the Watergate affair . . . I have the greatest confidence in the President and I am absolutely positive he had nothing to do with this mess."

The nation's Democratic Governors, meeting in Huron, Ohio, voted unanimously to demand that the Watergate investigation be turned over to an impartial prosecutor outside the administration.

Rep. John Moss (D-Cal.) raised the issue of possible impeachment action in the aftermath of yesterday's developments. He said he would ask that a special committee of the House be appointed to inquire into possibility of presidential involvement in the Watergate scandal.

"I am not saying we should move to impeach. I am merely saying we should be prepared. The House has the responsibility to set up the machinery so that if there is a move to impeach we should be ready." He added that "before we even suggest impeachment, we must have the most uncontroverted evidence."

The President announced that he will meet with the Democratic and Republican leadership of Congress this morning at the White House, presumably in an effort to begin to repair his ragged relationships with Capitol Hill.

Mr. Nixon used warm words of praise for Kleindienst, Haldeman and Ehrlichman in announcing their departures.

He said Kleindienst's decision to leave because of close ties to individuals implicated in the Watergate inquiry was "in accordance with the highest standards of public service and legal ethics." The individuals to whom Kleindienst alluded presumably included former Attorney General John N. Mitchell, who was in charge of Mr. Nixon's re-

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election campaign at the time of the Watergate bugging incident.

The President spoke of Haldeman and Ehrlichman as "two of my closest friends and most trusted assistants in the White House."

Mr. Nixon stressed that "neither the submission nor the acceptance of their resignations at this time should be seen by anyone as evidence of any wrongdoing by either one. Such an assumption would be both unfair and unfounded."

By contrast the firing of Dean was revealed in one coolly phrased sentence. "Finally, I have today requested and accepted the resignation of John W. Dean III from his position on the White House staff as counsel."

Dean served notice on April 19 that he would not become a scapegoat for the Watergate scandal. Word was also passed by associates of Dean that he was ready to implicate Ehrlichman and Haldeman in the case.

Besides the resignations announced yesterday, at least five other high administration or campaign officials have quit in the wake of revelations about the Watergate: Mitchell, presidential appointments secretary Dwight Chapin, special counsel to the President Charles W. Colson, deputy campaign director Jeb Stuart Magruder and acting FBI Director L. Patrick Gray III.

The massive shake-up of the White House command and the ensuing personnel reshuffling threw the administration into a state of disarray if not temporary immobility.

It threatens the federal government's largest single enterprise, the Pentagon, with a state of leaderlessness with Richardson's new assignment. In the White House, Haldeman and Ehrlichman had been the twin pillars of a management system in which they had been regarded as indispensable to the President. Haldeman, particularly, was the ultimate traffic controller and organizer of the flow of presidential business.

In the Justice Department the departure of Kleindienst came fresh upon the heels of the political melodrama of the decline and fall of acting FBI Director L. Patrick Gray III, an episode that had already seriously demoralized the Bureau and the Department of which it is a part.

Nor was there any assurance that the events of yesterday would turn off the fearsome faucet of Watergate revelations. Ahead are the prospect of indictments, criminal trials, heavily publicized Senate hearings and the ever-haunting question of presidential involvement. Watergate's political liabilities are still incalculable, with the polls registering the most precipitous drop of the President's popularity in his entire tenure.

Sen. Javits "Deeply Disturbed"

When news of the White House shake-up reached the Senate Foreign Relations Committee yesterday, during an appearance by Secretary of State William P. Rogers, Sen. Jacob K. Javits (R-N.Y.) said he was "very deeply disturbed" by reports that "the Watergate scandal has immobilized the government processes of the United States."

Rogers replied that from the standpoint of foreign affairs, "nothing has happened that has bogged down or anything of the kind. I can assure you and the American people that the government is functioning effectively in

the foreign affairs area . . ."

But Rogers, for many years a political intimate of the President, said he had discussed with Mr. Nixon the need for "corrective action" in the political system—particularly "campaign contributions and appointments . . . I talked to the President about it and he agrees. It is an evil that effects any particular administration; it is a fact of life."

In yesterday's statement, the President said Richardson's charter as new Attorney General will include recommending changes in the law "to prevent future campaign abuses of the sort recently uncovered." The abuses to which he referred were secret election funds for the 1972 campaign amounting by some estimates to more \$2 million. A secret election fund was also the central issue in Mr. Nixon's 1952 "Checkers" speech.

The news of the Watergate shake-up was conveyed to reporters at a morning briefing by White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler. After Ziegler's seven-minute announcement the newsmen raced for phones in a scene of pandemonium. No one bothered with questions.

Ziegler said that the President left for Camp David intending to spend the weekend in solitude. As events developed in the Watergate case he was visited by Haldeman, Ehrlichman, Kleindienst, Secretary of State Rogers, Ziegler and a speechwriter, Ray Price.

Haldeman and Ehrlichman, in their letters of resignation, both pledged to cooperate fully with the Justice Department investigation and will meet this week with U.S. attorneys and with the Senate Select Committee investigating the Watergate affair.

"I fully agree with the importance of a complete investigation by the appropriate authorities . . ." wrote Haldeman, "but am deeply concerned that, in the process, it has become virtually impossible under these circumstances for me to carry on my regular responsibilities in Ehrlichman wrote:

"I have confidence in the ultimate prevalence of truth; I intend to do what I can to speed truth's discovery."

The drumbeat of disclosures, growing more serious and sensational on virtually a daily basis since Mr. Nixon announced two weeks ago that there were "major developments" in the case, has lifted Watergate into a national scandal of historic proportions. It is an affair that is now being compared to such scandals as Teapot Dome in the 1920s and the Grant scandals of a century ago.

Watergate did not burst so suddenly and dramatically on the national scene. Indeed, for months it was widely



United Press International

White House aides H. R. Haldeman, front, and John Ehrlichman, rear, as they arrived last Friday at Andrews Air

Force Base after a Mississippi trip with the President. In center is presidential physician, Dr. Walter Tkach.

discounted officially—and ignored publicly—as a clumsy, bungled “caper.”

The case came to light on the night of last June 17, a Saturday. A security guard by the name of Frank Wills noticed a latch of a basement door taped open at the Watergate complex of apartments and offices. He removed the tape and continued his rounds. Later he discovered the tape had been replaced. He called the Metropolitan police.

Next morning's Washington Post reported the first news of the break-in.

Five men, including one who said he had been a Central Intelligence Agency employee, were surprised at gunpoint about 2:30 a.m. by police in a sixth floor suite occupied by the Democratic National Committee. When arrested, the suspects were all wearing rubber surgical gloves. Sophisticated electronic eavesdropping devices and burglary equipment were confiscated.

Police also seized \$2,300 in cash. Most of the money was in \$100 bills with the serial numbers in sequence. As the months passed and the story unfolded, the use of \$100 bills became a characteristic of the Watergate affair.

The suspects, it developed, were engaged in an elaborate plot to bug the Democratic Party headquarters. Adding to the bizarre nature of the case was the composition of that original group of five men.

Some of them came out of a background of anti-Castro activities with a vaguely and ill-defined association with the CIA in the days of the Bay of Pigs invasion of April, 1961. Three of the men were born in Cuba. A fourth was said to have trained Cuban exiles for guerrilla activity after the Bay of Pigs.

The fifth, booked as “Edward Martin, alias James W. McCord” of New York City and perhaps the Washington metropolitan area, said he had retired from the CIA in 1970. He gave his present occupation as a “security consultant.”

Nine months later, after the trial and conviction of the original Watergate conspirators, it was McCord who precipitated a new round of accusations culminating in yester-

day's resignations. McCord stated publicly that “political pressure” had been applied to the Watergate defendants to plead guilty and remain silent, that government witnesses had committed perjury and that others were involved in the conspiracy.

But for months after the original break-in and arrests the Watergate case seemed consigned to an incident without major national significance.

Overshadowed by Other News

Except for that first Sunday in June when the Watergate operation surfaced, it did not dominate the news. It was overshadowed in the days ahead by news of combat operations in Vietnam, of the U.S. pulling out its last land forces, and of the approaching national political conventions and subsequent presidential election.

Most citizens did not respond to Watergate. Neither did important elements of the American press. Both seemed to accept the words of leading officials in the Nixon administration that Watergate, whatever else it was, had no connection with the White House or the Nixon re-election campaign apparatus.

The statements were unequivocal. John N. Mitchell, who had left his post as attorney general to head the Committee for the Re-election of the President, immediately set the tone for the denials that followed.

Those arrested at the Watergate, Mitchell said, “were not operating either in our behalf or with our consent.” As far as McCord was concerned, Mitchell said: “The person involved is the proprietor of a private security agency who was employed by our committee months ago to assist with the installation of our security system. He has, as we understand it, a number of business clients and interests and we have no knowledge of these relationships.”

On behalf of the President, press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler said then that he would not comment on a “third-rate burglary attempt.” He added that “certain elements may try to stretch this beyond what it is.”

Six days after the break-in President Nixon made his

first comment on the case. He said that Ziegler and Mitchell had "stated my position, and have also stated the facts accurately." He added:

"This kind of activity, as Mr. Ziegler has indicated, has no place whatever in our electoral process, or in our governmental process."

But gradually pieces of the Watergate story began to surface. White House connections, although tenuous, were established as the names of E. Howard Hunt and G. Gordon Liddy became associated with high-ranking officials.

It is a matter of history that The Washington Post, and particularly two young reporters on its metropolitan staff, Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward, provided much of the material that made Watergate a name known around the world.

It was their reporting of such things as an elaborate campaign of espionage and sabotage directed by prominent associates of the President, of the relationship between such people as Donald Segretti with White House appointments secretary Dwight Chapin, of the existence of secret cash funds used to finance the sabotage-espionage operations, and of the links between ranking officials with the undercover work that led, eventually, to an unraveling of the case.

It is also a matter of history that The Post and its reporters became the principal objects of attack by the administration.

"The Post has maliciously sought to give the appearance of a direct connection between the White House and the Watergate—a charge The Post knows—and a half dozen investigations have found—to be false," said Clark MacGregor, chairman of the Nixon re-election committee, last Oct. 16.

Character Assassination Charged

That same day Ziegler said:

"I will not dignify with comment stories based on hearsay, character assassination, innuendo or guilt by association . . . The President is concerned about the technique being applied by the opposition in the stories themselves . . . The opposition has been making charges which have not been substantiated."

Nine days later Ziegler termed the reports "a blatant effort at character assassination that I do not think has been witnessed in the political process in some time."

In November, after the election, the official denials continued.

"The charge of subverting the whole political process, that is a fantasy, a work of fiction rivaling only 'Gone With the Wind' in circulation and 'Portnoy's Complaint' for indecency," said Charles W. Colson, a key White House aide.

In a vitriolic comment issued at the peak of the presidential campaign, Sen. Robert Dole (R-Kan.), then chair-

man of the Republican National Committee, attacked what he called "political garbage" printed about the Watergate. ". . . The Washington Post is conducting itself by journalistic standards that would cause mass resignations on principle from the Quicksilver Times, a local underground newspaper."

Within six months Dole was calling publicly for the resignation of Haldeman and Ehrlichman and saying "the credibility of the administration is zilch, zero."

Mr. Nixon himself had already expressed his own strong conviction that "no one in the White House staff, no one in this administration, presently employed, was involved in this very bizarre incident." He made that statement at a White House press conference last Aug. 29.

At that time, he praised the work of his White House counsel, Dean, in investigating the Watergate case.

"The other point I should make," he said, "is that these investigations, the investigation by the GAO, the investigation by the FBI, by the Department of Justice, have, at my direction, had the total cooperation of the—not only the White House—but also of all agencies of the Government."

"In addition to that, within our own staff, under my direction, Counsel to the President, Mr. Dean, has conducted a complete investigation of all leads which might involve any present members of the White House staff."

It was then that Mr. Nixon said, "I can state categorically that his investigation" indicates no one either in the White House or the administration was involved.

In his press conference that summer day, Mr. Nixon dealt at length with his hopes for the future. He spoke of winning the election and building a "new majority," and of his desire to receive "a positive mandate."

The President then spelled out his goals for his next four years. In doing so he returned to the theme that had helped him win in 1968 — of a need to bring the country together.

"Four years ago the country was torn apart, torn apart physically and torn apart inside. It has changed very subtly, but very definitely. What we need in this country is a new sense of mission, a new sense of confidence, a new sense of purpose as to where we are going."

On Nov. 7, Mr. Nixon won his great victory and by the time of his second inauguration on Jan. 20 it seemed that America was on the verge of a new era of peace abroad and reconciliation at home. He moved swiftly to implement his new goals, scrapped economic controls he had imposed earlier, hailed the return of America's prisoners of war from Vietnam, and set out to fashion the new majority that would place his imprimatur on the year to come.

Now, only three months later, Watergate, the scandal that would not die, has overtaken him and his administration. And Richard Milhous Nixon, who has expressed so many times the personal problems of dealing with crises, is confronted with one of a magnitude that faced his presidential predecessors Andrew Johnson, Ulysses S. Grant, Warren G. Harding and, more recently and in a different context, Lyndon B. Johnson.