

Nixon Speech Raises Question

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President Nixon's Wednesday night speech shed little new light on the Watergate affair, but did raise at least one major question: Why did Mr. Nixon continue to rely on his counsel, John W. Dean III, as his main source of information after March 21, when Dean detailed the extent of the scandal?

It was on March 21, Mr. Nixon said in his speech to the nation, that Dean gave him "new information . . . that led me to conclude that the reports I had been getting for over nine months were not true."

Since Dean had been the source of the false informa-

tion for the preceding nine months, the question arises: Why did Mr. Nixon stick with Dean for nine more days as his chief Watergate

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reporter after receiving what the President termed the "troubling allegations" of March 21?

Upon hearing from Dean on March 21, Mr. Nixon said, he wanted to get "all the facts out" to the public, regardless of whether "anyone at the White House high up in my campaign had been involved in wrongdoing of any kind."

As his next step after

Dean's disclosures, Mr. Nixon said in his speech:

"At first I entrusted the task of getting me the facts to Mr. Dean. When, after spending a week at Camp David he failed to produce the written report I had asked for, I turned to (White House aide) John Ehrlichman and the Attorney General—while also making independent inquiries of my own . . ."

Mr. Nixon did not explain why he had not lost faith in Dean by this point, especially since he says the following were among the matters about which he heard from Dean for the first time on March 21:

See COMPARE, A4, Col. 1

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COMPARE, From A1

• "... That the planning of the Watergate break-in went beyond those who had been tried and convicted, and that at least one, and possibly more, persons at the re-election committee were involved."

• "... That funds had been raised for payments to the defendants, with the knowledge and approval of persons both on the White House staff and at the re-election committee." He also said he had been told that the money was not to buy the defendants' silence, but rather was to cover attorneys' fees and family support.

• "... That a member of my staff had talked to one of the defendants about clemency, but not that of-

fers of clemency had been made . . ."

• "... That one of the defendants was currently attempting to blackmail the White House by demanding payment of \$120,000 as the price of not talking about other activities, unrelated to Watergate, in which he had engaged."

Mr. Nixon said that "these allegations were very troubling and they gave a new dimension to the Watergate matter."

The President also did not address himself to a second meeting on March 21 at which Dean, according to testimony, said he would go before the Watergate grand jury only if he had immunity.

In their testimony before the Senate select Watergate committee, former White

House aides H. R. Haldeman and Ehrlichman said they became suspicious of Dean's motives when the presidential counsel insisted they should testify before the grand jury only if they had immunity. Haldeman and Ehrlichman said they both told the President at that meeting that they were willing to go before the grand jury without immunity. (Senate Watergate committee notes indicate that White House logs also give this same version of events of March 21.)

Despite Haldeman's and Ehrlichman's suspicions, the President still entrusted Dean to go to Camp David on March 23 and prepare a Watergate report.

Before going to Camp David, Dean was publicly accused of "probably" lying to FBI agents in the initial stage of the Watergate investigation. The accusation came March 22 from L. Patrick Gray, the acting FBI director, at his Senate confirmation hearing.

Mr. Nixon did not address himself to Gray's allegation in his Wednesday speech, further adding to the question of why he would continue to rely on Dean despite all the warning signs.

Mr. Nixon's statement and speech of Wednesday also appear to conflict with the President's own earlier speech of April 30 as to what action he took in the aftermath of Dean's March 21 allegations.

In that April 30 speech, Mr. Nixon said that as a result of "new information that came to me on March 21, I personally assumed responsibility for coordinating intensive new inquiries into the matter, and I personally ordered those conducting the investigations to get all the facts and report them directly to me."

In his Wednesday speech, Mr. Nixon made no mention of "personally" ordering "those conducting the investigation" to do anything between March 21 and April 15. Instead, he said, he turned first to Dean and then later to Ehrlichman.

He said he told Ehrlichman to call Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst in late March to tell Kleindienst to report directly to Mr. Nixon any information on White House involve-

ment in the Watergate affair. However, Mr. Nixon said nothing of contacting Kleindienst "personally."

Mr. Nixon's latest version of post-March 21 events came after Kleindienst, Gray and Assistant Attorney General Henry E. Petersen had all testified before the Senate Watergate committee.

Their testimony conflicted

sharply with Mr. Nixon's April 30 speech on the point of when they were personally contacted by the President after March 21. Gray said he was never contacted. Kleindienst and Petersen said they were not contacted by Mr. Nixon until April 15. (Kleindienst, as Attorney General, nominally headed the Watergate probe, while Petersen headed it in actuality.)

The President also did not address himself to the advice Petersen testified he gave Mr. Nixon on April 15—namely, that he should fire Haldeman and Ehrlichman to avoid "vast embarrassment" because both were likely to be criminally prosecuted.

Petersen said Mr. Nixon also asked him on April 15 if Dean should be fired and Petersen said he replied no, because Dean was cooperating with the investigation. (Petersen said he told Mr. Nixon later in April that Dean was no longer cooperating.)

Mr. Nixon did not explain in his Wednesday night speech why, after receiving Petersen's advice on April 15, he asked for Dean's resignation the next day, according to Dean's testimony.

The President also did not explain why, in light of Petersen's advice, he called Haldeman and Ehrlichman "two of the finest public servants it has been my privilege to know" when he announced their resignations in his April 30 speech.

The Wednesday night speech contained no words of praise for Haldeman and Ehrlichman.

The President had now made three major statements on the Watergate affair this year. The first was his April 30 speech in which he avoided specifics while disclaiming any personal in-

volvement or knowledge in the Watergate bugging and subsequent cover-up.

The next was his more detailed May 22 statement. Apparently anticipating Dean's testimony before the Senate committee, Mr. Nixon specifically denied trying to involve the CIA in the Watergate affair as a means of covering up the scandal under the guise of national security.

His third major statement, delivered Wednesday night, was widely expected

to be more detailed than either of the two previous statements, but actually proved to be more like the April 30 speech in its lack of specifics.

As in his May 22 statement, the President did address himself Wednesday night to a call he made to acting FBI Director Gray on July 6, 1972. In that call, according to Gray's testimony, Gray told Mr. Nixon that some of the President's aides were trying to "mortally wound" the President by using the FBI and CIA to "confuse" the investigation of the Watergate break-in.

Mr. Nixon, in his Wednesday statement, said that Gray told him in the July 6 conversation that Gray had determined from his meeting with Lt. Gen. Vernon Walters, deputy CIA director, that there was no CIA involvement in the Watergate affair.

"I concluded by instructing him to press forward vigorously with his own investigation," Mr. Nixon said.

There was nothing in either the April 30th address or Wednesday's speech

about Gray's purported warning that the President might become "mortally wounded" by the Watergate affair. In his May 22 statement, Mr. Nixon said that Gray, in the July 6 conversation, suggested that the matter of Watergate might lead higher. I told him to press ahead with the investigation."

In his May 22 statement, the President did not state specifically when he first learned of the break-in at the office of Dr. Lewis Fielding, the psychiatrist for Pentagon Papers defendant Daniel Ellsberg, in September, 1971.

However, he did say in that statement that Kleindienst, on April 25 of this year, "informed me that . . . the government had clear evidence" that Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt Jr. had been involved in the break-in at Fielding's office.

Also in the May 22 speech, Mr. Nixon said he had not learned of the Fielding break-in until after March 21 of this year. In his Wednesday speech, Mr. Nixon said his earlier statement was "not precisely accurate"

and that he first learned of the Fielding break-in on March 17.

This would mean that Mr. Nixon was aware of the Fielding break-in when he was introduced in early April to Judge W. Matt Byrne, the federal judge who was presiding over the Ellsberg trial at the time.

Ehrlichman, in his testimony, said he had two meetings with Byrne in early April. At the first meeting, acting under Mr. Nixon's instruction, Ehrlichman said he sounded out Byrne on the possibility of becoming FBI director.

Mr. Nixon said Wednesday that he wanted the information of the Fielding break-in kept secret when he first learned of it for fear of endangering "national security." He said he later was persuaded by Kleindienst on April 25 that the information on the break-in should go to Judge Byrne.

After receiving the information, Byrne dismissed the charges against Ellsberg on grounds of government misconduct. Dean has testified that former White House aide Egil Krogh told

him that the orders for Fielding break-in came Krogh directly from Nixon.

The April 30 speech made no mention of the Fielding break-in.

The Wednesday speech, most regards, offered little basis for specific point-point comparison with Nixon's earlier Watergate statements. Left unanswered were numerous questions, including:

- Why Mr. Nixon never asked former Attorney General John N. Mitchell, campaign manager until July 1, 1972, for any information on the Watergate affair. Mitchell testified before the Watergate committee that, if Mr. Nixon had asked him, he would have cited "chapter and verse" Watergate.

- What is the President's full version of what occurred at a Sept. 15, 1972 meeting with Haldeman and Dean? Dean claims that was at this meeting that he received the clear impression that Mr. Nixon knew the Watergate cover-up and was congratulating him on it.