

Nixon Is Said to Halt Friends' Efforts for TV

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SAN CLEMENTE, Calif., March 26—Richard M. Nixon was reliably reported today to have called a halt, at least for the time being, to efforts by a group of friends to obtain bids around \$250,000 for his appearance on television to discuss his years in the White House.

Negotiations for a "Nixon special," initiated several weeks ago and described here by a former aide as "unauthorized exploratory talks" from which Mr. Nixon remained aloof, grew out of the group's concern over his dwindling finances and steadily mounting legal expenses, which may total nearly a half-million dollars.

The group includes Coast businessmen, a television personality and a former military aide.

Recent developments have made the project inadvisable at this time, although it may perhaps be reconsidered at some later date," a former member of the Nixon White House staff said in discussing the decision to abandon for the time being further talks with television industry officials.

'A Standing Offer'

"Although the matter is now at a standstill: in accordance with Mr. Nixon's wishes, he has a standing offer of approximately \$250,000 from one independent program producer who is prepared to go ahead whenever Mr. Nixon is agreeable, and there is solid interest in other quarters," he said.

The source of the pending offer was not identified.

The "recent developments" influencing Mr. Nixon's decision, according to the informant, included by were not limited to the controversy touched off by the CBS television network's reported payment of \$50,000 to H. R. Haldeman for his two-part Watergate interview, as well as public criticism leading to the recent cancellations of lecture tours by Ronald L. Ziegler and John W. Dean 3d.

An inquiry at Mr. Nixon's office here was answered with the following statement: by Jeanne Miller, a staff assistant: "Because of commitments Mr. Nixon already has in meeting deadlines for publication of the first volume of his memoirs, and also because of continuing restrictions placed on his activity by his doctors, it is not possible to schedule any interviews in the foreseeable future."

Opposition by Ziegler

Mr. Ziegler, who was Mr.

Nixon's White House press chief and accompanied him into retirement last Aug. 9 as his principal adviser, was understood to have strongly opposed the television project from the outset, following his own brief venture before the public and his first-hand opportunity to assess the national mood.

The former President's physician, Dr. John Lungren of Long Beach, and his attorneys, Herbert Miller Jr. in Washington and Dan Butler in Los Angeles, also were critical of the proposal as having medical and possibly legal risks.

Mr. Ziegler was quoted by a source as saying that "the time and the public's perspective are not yet right" for Mr. Nixon to embark on public appearances of any kind.

On Feb. 22, amid efforts to obtain a financial commitment for a Nixon television appearance, the former Special Prosecutor, Leon Jaworski, publicly called on the former President to come forward and tell the American people "the truth about Watergate."

Mr. Dean, in abandoning his lecture tour, also urged Mr. Nixon to explain publicly his role in the scandal, as did Mr. Haldeman in the first of his two paid interviews on CBS television last Sunday evening.

Haldeman Assessment

Echoing the comment attributed to Mr. Ziegler, Mr. Haldeman said he was not sure that the man he served as White House chief of staff was ready to offer such an explanation or that the nation was yet "in a mood of acceptance for what he would have to say."

One of the group of Nixon friends said such statements, in themselves, virtually ruled out any possibility of the former President's agreeing to appear on television or accepting any of the many lecture offers he has received.

It was learned that among those involved, either in discussions of the advisability of a Nixon television appearance or more directly in the loosely coordinated "exploratory" talks were the following:

Paul Presley, San Clemente motel man and Nixon neighbor; Mr. Ziegler; Rabbi Baruch Korff, who heads the money-raising Nixon Justice Fund; Frank Gannon, a former speech writer who is helping Mr. Nixon with his memoirs; Johnny Grant of Los Angeles television station KTTV who is a Nixon friend of many years, and Mr. Nixon's former military aide, Col. Jack Brenman of the Marine Corps who is stationed at nearby Camp Pendleton.

Mr. Presley and Rabbi Korff confirmed that they had been active in soliciting bids for a "Nixon special" but stressed that no attempt had been made to "sell" Mr. Nixon for a paid

television appearance. They said their discussions had been in the nature of their

had been in the nature of responses and explorations of earlier inquiries and that their efforts had been purposely undertaken without any direct authorization from Mr. Nixon.

They said the national television networks, among other news media, have had longstanding requests for interviews with Mr. Nixon.

The networks and independent producers were said by two of Mr. Nixon's friends to have been told that if they were to amplify their earlier requests with a cash offer of around \$250,000 and submit

a program format meeting Mr. Nixon's approval he might be prevailed upon to appear on television.

It was made clear to the television interests by Mr. Presley, Rabbi Korff and others that any proposal, to be acceptable, would have to be a "historical" documentary-type program spanning the five and a half years of the Nixon Presidency and not what Mr. Presley referred to as "merely a Watergate inquisition on the air."

All questions about Watergate and the portion of the program devoted to them would

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Appearance by Him

have been subject to Mr. Nixon's prior approval, Mr. Presley explained, in order to insure "a properly balanced program."

The television officials also were told that it would be necessary to deal with Mr. Nixon's broad political philosophy, his opinions on current world affairs and, particularly, his détente missions to Peking and Moscow and the withdrawal of American troops from Southeast Asia, highlighting those events through use of film clips.

The \$250,000 asking price, according to one informant, was first used by Mr. Nixon

himself in casual conversation with a dinner guest at the Nixons' Casa Pacifica estate in January.

The interest of Mr. Nixon's friends first centered on the three major networks, particularly ABC whose news coverage of his Presidency Mr. Nixon always favored over that of CBS and NBC.

Rabbi Korff acknowledged that "a fee of \$250,000 was mentioned" in a recent discussion that he had with an ABC official, whom he declined to identify, as well as other conditions that would have to be

agreed to before the matter could be put before Mr. Nixon.

Asked if he reported the conversation to Mr. Nixon, he said: "No, it was too embryonic to take to him."

Another member of the "exploratory" group said he understood that ABC had objected to paying such a large sum for what it envisaged as essentially a news program, but also to the restrictions placed on the questioning, particularly about Watergate and related events.

This source said "soundings" of the CBS and NBC networks had produced reactions that there were no more encouraging.