Dean Recounts White House Anxieties

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In his Senate testimony yesterday, former presidential counsel John W. Dean III drew a picture of a pre-election White House neurotically concerned with the presence of anti-Nixon demonstrators and morbidly fascinated with gossip and intelligence about the Democratic opposition.

Others who worked there and in the Nixon campaign said in interviews yesterday that Dean's description matched their own recollections.

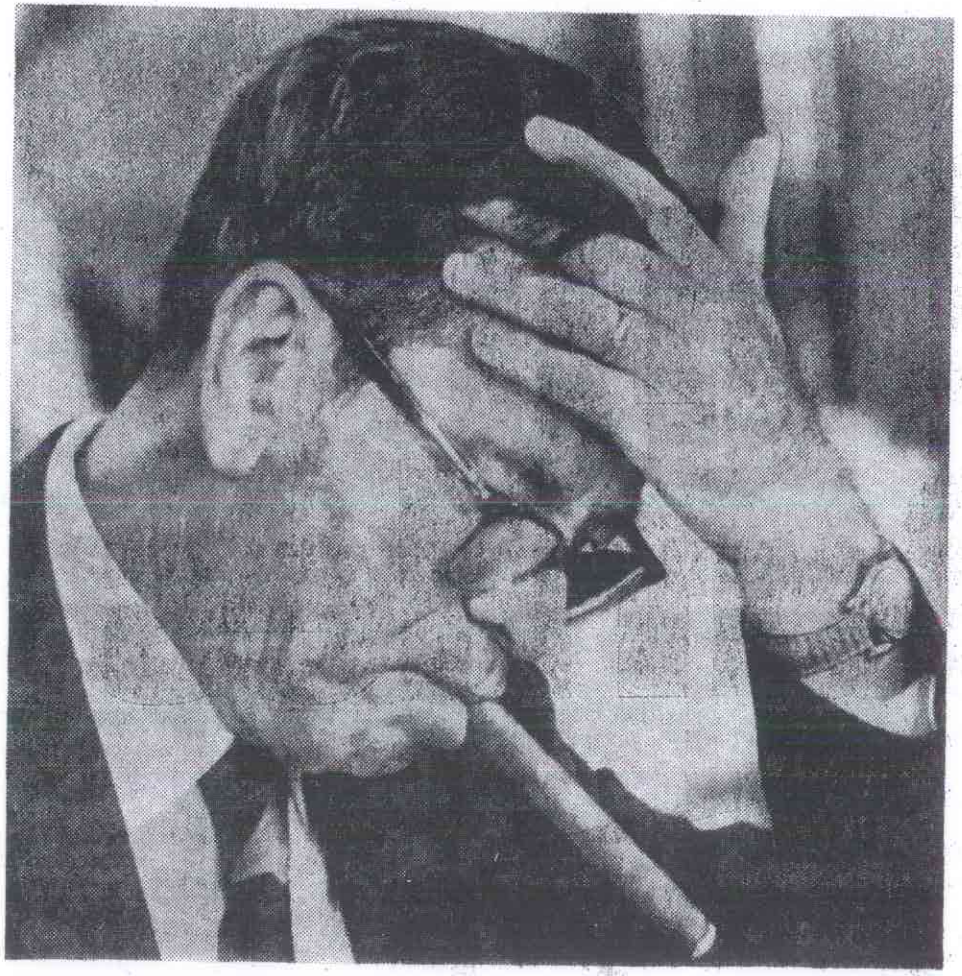
But Patrick J. Buchanan, then and now a consultant to the President, said there had been "a real diminution of concern" by the time of which Dean was speaking, compared to the atmosphere in 1969 and early 1970.

"I don't think there was paranoia," Buchanan said.

Dean did not use the word "paranoia" in his testimony, but he told the Senate Watergate investigators that he found "a climate of excessive concern over the political impact of demonstrators, excessive concern over leaks, an insatiable appetite for political intelligence, all coupled with a do-it-yourself White House staff, regardless of the law."

Dean called the break-in at Democratic headquarters an "inevitable outgrowth" of this climate, and said it was also responsible for such actions as:

• A threat by former presidential aide Dwight Chapin "to get some 'thugs' to remove" a single demonstrator the President had spotted in Lafayette Park.



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Ga. Sen. Herman Talmadge thoughtfully puffs cigar during Dean's appearance.

• An order by the President, using "some rather blunt synonyms," for the Secret Service to remove a group of demonstrators in Akron, and a request from the President, just last March, for a speech to be drafted showing that "his opponents had employed demonstrators against him in his re-election campaign."

• A call from Richard G. Kleindienst, then deputy attorney general, instructing Dean to carry from the FBI to the White House "some very important information" of a "rather sensitive nature . . . regarding the foreign travels of Mary Jo Kopechne," the young woman killed in an auto accident involving Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.).

• The dispatch from the White House to Chappaquiddick Island, site of that accident, of special investigator Anthony Ulasewicz, who, Dean said John Caulfield told him, was on the scene

"within six hours of the accident" and posed as a reporter to dig out information on the case.

• A proposal from presidential aide H.R. (Bob) Haldeman, rejected as too dangerous, that Kennedy be kept under surveillance 24 hours a day.

• A special investigation of Kennedy's activities during a 24-hour stopover in Hawaii on a 1971 Far Eastern trip.

• And the delivery, during the spring of 1972, by "a top man at the Secret Service" of information regarding Democratic presidential contender George McGovern, which then White House aide Charles Colson "was very interested" in and "had . . . published."

White House press secretary Ronald Ziegler declined to comment on Dean's testimony and most others mentioned by Dean were unavailable to reporters.

Jack Warner, a spokesman for the Secret Service, said it had begun an internal investigation of the charges that Secret Service agents protecting McGovern were reporting back to the White House, at the time those charges first appeared, last November, in The New York Times.

Neither then or later, he said, "have we found anything to bear out these allegations. Our investigation is continuing."

Colson, in a separate interview, acknowledged receiving the report from Dean but said he had not been able to get it published, "because no one could ever check it out." He said the report concerned "a fund-raising affair McGovern attended in Philadelphia, where the fellow in charge had a questionable background."

Colson said Dean "just walked in with it, and never said where it came from. It's very characteristic of what Dean did throughout his testimony yesterday—laid off his own sins on others, and did it cleverly."

Colson said he had been interviewed about the case by the Secret Service and had told them the same thing. Asked if he now believed the report came from the Secret Service, Colson said, "Well, Dean said it was from the Secret Service, and they indicated it, frankly, when they came to see me."

Kennedy's press secretary, Richard Drayne, said the senator was unaware of any White House surveillance, or of the activities of Ulasewicz at Chappaquiddick. Drayne said Kennedy told him yesterday he knew nothing of any foreign travels by Miss Kopechne nor of any reason why his visit to Hawaii should have been of White House interest.

The report to the White House on Kennedy's visit to Honolulu on Aug. 17, 1971, submitted by Dean to the Senate committee, is very bland.

It said Kennedy held an airport press conference, left with two friends and made no public appearances except for a tennis game.

"Discreet inquiry determined that Kennedy used the estate (where he was staying) solely for sleeping purposes, took only his breakfast meal at that location and quietly visited friends at other locations on the island . . . An extensive survey of hotels, discreet cocktail lounges and other hideaways was conducted with a view towards determining a covert EMK (Kennedy) visit. The results were negative," the report said.

In his statement yesterday, Dean said that "it was not until I joined the White House staff in July of 1970 that I fully realized the strong feelings that the President and his staff had toward antiwar demonstrators—and demonstrators in general."

He said the White House continually sought information that would discredit the demonstration leaders, show that they were backed "by some foreign enemy" or had ties to some "major political figures, specifically members of the U.S. Senate, who opposed the President's war policies."

Dean said that in the late winter of 1971 "the President happened to look out the windows of the residence of the White House and saw a lone man with a large 10-foot sign stretched out in front of Lafayette Park."

He said Larry Higby, a Haldeman aide, "called me to his office to tell me of the President's displeasure . . . and told me that Mr. Haldeman said the sign had to come down."

Leaving Higby's office, he met Chapin, "who said that he was going to get some 'thugs' to remove that man from Lafayette Park." Dean said he dissuaded him and, with help from the Secret Service and the Park police, persuaded the man to move to the back side of the park, "out of sight from the White House."

Haldeman, he said, "was delighted."

Only three months ago, he said, Mr. Nixon himself told him that "as a part of the planned counter-offensive for dealing with the Senate Watergate investigation, the President wanted to show that his opponents had employed demonstrators against during his re-election campaign."

The problem, said Dean, was that "we never found a scintilla of viable evidence indicating that these demonstrators were part of a master plan . . . funded by the Democratic political funds, nor that they had any direct connection with the McGovern campaign." For that reason, he said, William Baroody was never able to write the speech the President wanted on the subject.

"This was explained to Mr. Haldeman," Dean said, "but the President believed that the opposite was true."

Dean's view of a White House neurotically preoccupied with the threat of demonstrators was contradicted by Buchanan, who had been a close adviser to Mr. Nixon for the past seven years.

"There was a great deal more apprehension here in 1969 and at the time of Cambodia and Kent State," he said, "than in any subsequent period. By the time we were moving into the campaign—and certainly after the May Day demonstrations in 1971—there was a real diminution of concern. For one thing, every time a demonstration occurred, it was politically helpful."

Dean's statement to the committee yesterday differed in tone from his description of the same situation in a report he composed last March, before his forced resignation from the White House. That March statement was also entered in evidence yesterday.

In both statements, Dean referred to White House dissatisfaction with intelligence reports on the demonstrators. In March he said that "when Haldeman would read the reports regarding demonstrations he would — and rightly so — express continual dissatisfaction."

"While the evidence would appear that the demonstrations were well-orchestrated and well-financed," he wrote then, "no one could ever find hard information as to who was behind it and what motivation might exist, other than the obvious antiwar theme."

Back in March, he suggested two reasons why the President might be rightly concerned with the demonstration problem: "First," he

said, "it made the atmosphere of public opinion much more difficult for the President to negotiate an honorable peace in Vietnam, and, secondly, when the government dealt firmly with the demonstrators, we would be charged with oppressive tactics even though the demonstrators were seeking to tie the government into knots."

Interviews with three former White House and campaign aides, on the other hand, brought support for the view of a White House preoccupation with security and political espionage, which Dean described yesterday.

One former campaign aide said Dean's testimony yesterday "rang very true. We all learned that what pleased them most was a tidbit they could pass on to Haldeman. That would get you rewards. Every one of us felt the need to supply that kind of information."

He recalled that as far back as Mr. Nixon's 1962 campaign for Governor of California, Haldeman, who was then the campaign manager and others "were so desperately afraid of letting Nixon see any hostile demonstrators that we had to organize groups of kids to lock arms and keep them away."

A second man, a former White House official, said, "It all goes back to his (Mr. Nixon's) problem with having the unexpected happen. It's part and parcel of that. His staff learns to go to any length to protect him from something for which he is not prepared."

A third man, now also retired from the White House, said "I never got the feeling that Nixon himself or the top staff guys—the ones at the 7:30 meeting — were that upset with the demonstrators.

"But I always had the feeling that the reaction accelerated as it went down the chain of command, and frequently by the time it hit the third or fourth guy, it was completely out of control. There was a lot of it with the guys who worked for Haldeman, Colson, Chapin and the deep-down underlings of (John) Ehrlichman — Boy Scout stuff."