

FBI Interview With Colson

Charles W. Colson, former special counsel to the President, was interviewed in the presence of his attorneys David Shapiro and Judah Best, in their offices at 1735 New York Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. Mr. Colson was advised he was being contacted at the request of the Department of Justice to determine if he could furnish information about an investigation conducted on behalf of the White House into the public disclosures of the Pentagon Papers and specifically for information he may have about an alleged burglary of the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist by E. Howard Hunt and G. Gordon Liddy during the course of that investigation.

Mr. Colson voluntarily signed a waiver of rights . . . and advised as follows:

Mr. Colson recalled attending meetings in early July, 1971, at the White House concerning the disclosures of the Pentagon Papers and described these meetings as "kind of panic sessions" to determine what was going on and trying to establish what was going to be published next by the newspapers and the accuracy of those publications. Mr. Colson indicated he was not involved in the White House investigation into the Pentagon Papers disclosures, but was engaged in the government's litigation to stop publication of the Papers. He was engaged on an almost full-time basis at this time with the preparation of the President's August 15 economics decision initiating Phase I of the price freeze.

When the Pentagon Papers were first published in The New York Times there was a need in the White House for someone to do research and coordinate assignments involving investigation into the leak. Colson recalled he recommended Hunt, whom he had known for a period of years and several other individuals for this assignment. Hunt was subsequently interviewed by John D. Ehrlichman, former assistant to the President.

Later, Mr. Colson received a telephone call from Mr. Ehrlichman who was then in California with the President, asking whether Hunt could be brought in and directing that he should be put to work on the investigation.

Mr. Colson asked his staff secretary to process the necessary papers regarding the employment. Hunt was assigned to Colson's staff for internal budget processing only.

Mr. Colson knew that the "Plumbers" (publicly identified as Egil Krogh, David Young, Hunt and Liddy) were conducting a check for a personality profile of Daniel Ellsberg to determine what motivated him, what kind of "wild things" he might do. Mr. Colson said there was an enormous concern over leaks of sensitive information at that time.

Mr. Colson had no discussions or advance information of the alleged burglary. He knew the Plumbers were going to the West Coast but did not know which of them would actually make the trip. He first heard about the alleged burglary sometime later at a meeting and he could not recall the time of the meeting or who was present. He thought the meeting may have been a private one with Mr. Ehrlichman. He believes Mr. Ehrlichman told him, he does not recall specifically, but he gained the impression from the conversation that "they" tried to get the records of Ellsberg's psychiatrist and did not get them. Ehrlichman told him this was a national security mat-

ter and not to be discussed with anyone. Mr. Colson never heard any discussion of a burglary attempt on the home of Ellsberg's psychiatrist.

Mr. Colson was asked if he had any other discussions with White House staff members about the burglary. He recalled in connection with the Watergate investigation prior to the time when he was questioned by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and gave a deposition to Mr. Silbert of the United States Attorney's office, he asked John Dean, counsel to the President, what to do if the "Pentagon Papers question came up."

Dean told him that if asked, he was not to discuss the matter, inasmuch as it was a national security matter of the highest classification and that he (Dean) would interrupt such questions if present. He recalled receiving the same instructions from Mr. Ehrlichman in late March or April, 1973. He never discussed the burglary with Hunt or Liddy.

Concerning a current newspaper story that Hunt reportedly tried to talk to Mr. Colson sometime later about the burglary, Colson recalled a chance meeting with Hunt one morning in his outer office. Hunt was waiting for him but Mr. Colson could not recall when the meeting took place. Hunt told him that he was on his way to give a briefing on what "they" had learned about Ellsberg, and that he had about a half an hour before the briefing and he wanted to talk to Colson about it. Colson told Hunt he did not have time to talk to him then, that he was in a hurry. Hunt did not try to broach the subject matter again.

Concerning the memorandum from Colson to Jon Huntsman dated September 13, 1971, requesting in accordance with an earlier arrangement the reimbursement of Hunt for the following expenses: Air fares for two men from New York

City to Washington, D.C., \$68.00; dinner check, Miami, \$35.85; Hotel bill for three men, Los Angeles, \$156.90, Colson advised as follows:

Colson furnished a copy of this memorandum from his own office files to the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the summer of 1972 when he was asked about Hunt's travel. This was the first occasion on which he had seen the memorandum and he did not know to what the entries on the memorandum related or the identity of the three men referred to in the memo. Colson never saw any of Hunt's vouchers or claims for reimbursement. These were initialed and submitted by Colson's secretary.

Concerning a recent newspaper story according to which Egil Krogh reportedly said he requested funds for Colson for implementing the effort to acquire information about Ellsberg, Colson could not recall Krogh asking him for money for the trip to California. He has a vague recollection that at about that time Mr. Ehrlichman spoke to him about getting some funds, maybe for Krogh, but when he checked with Mr. Ehrlichman later, Ehrlichman could not recall the request.

From time to time Colson saw memoranda prepared for the White House group working on the Pentagon Papers investigation, but he saw no reports prepared by that group. The memoranda which were shown to him by Hunt because of Colson's general interest in the issue of the Pentagon Papers, spoke of Hunt's frustrations trying to get things done in the Plumbers' unit and Hunt's analyses of the investigation. Colson saw nothing related to the psychological study of Ellsberg. The normal channel for papers generated by the Plumbers was to Egil Krogh and David Young. Colson had no information about the whereabouts or results of investigation conducted by that group.

Colson had no knowledge of other illegal activities engaged in by the group conducting the Pentagon Papers investigation on behalf of the White House.