

transcribed from tape

Charles Colson, former White House special counsel, said today that the great tragedy of the Watergate scandal is that President Nixon was ill-served by his closest advisers. He said, "It was a very, very easy thing for people to hide significant facts." He said that information about the break-in was kept from him, and "If they could hide them from me, how easy it was to hide it from the President."

Colson was special counsel to the President at the time of the break-in. He resigned in March and in recent weeks has said that President Nixon had no knowledge of the break-in or cover-up. He said that if John Dean testifies before the Senate next week that Nixon knew about the cover-up, he will be lying.

Colson had more interesting revelations about Dean. He said that when he asked about the whereabouts of E. Howard Hunt two days after the Watergate break-in, Dean told him that Hunt had been ordered out of the country. Colson said, "I exploded. After I exploded Dean went to a phone and came back and claimed he got the order rescinded." But Colson said that he does not know to whom Dean talked and never asked.

It was Colson who hired Hunt in 1971 as a White House consultant. He said that it wasn't until March 21st of this year that he began to suspect that Dean might be involved in a cover-up. Colson said that on several previous occasions Nixon had urged him to get the facts and that up until March 21st "every scrap of information I had I turned over to Dean." Colson said, "The simple fact is that Dean did not come clean with the President."

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