

Colson, After a Vocal Month, May

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Until he went public with a splash early in June, Charles Wendell Colson maintained that he preferred to work behind the scenes and keep his name out of the press.

For a busy month of outspoken interviews, those preferences were set aside as Colson, a former White House aide and political adviser to President Nixon whose name appears inseparably woven through the tangled skein of the Watergate affair, emerged as the President's most outspoken public defender.

Now that tactic, too, appears on the verge of abandonment. Colson appears today on the nationally televised program Face the Nation (CBS, WTOP). But according to one reliable account of his plans, that will be the last such appearance he will make. The policy of publicity is to be scrapped.

If its aim had been simply to get Colson into the newspapers, it could have been considered eminently successful. Colson was all over them yesterday, as he has been for most of June.

There was a story about Colson, who likes to say that "politics is a very rough business," admitting he ordered a 1971 investigation into the private life of Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.).

There was another about Colson, when he worked in the White House, ordering convicted Watergate defend-

ant E. Howard Hunt Jr. (a friend whom he had brought to the White House staff) to give a friendly journalist access to classified State Department cables.

And there was a third Colson story in yesterday's newspapers, an account of Sen. Lowell P. Weicker (R-Conn.), a member of the Senate select Watergate committee, ordering Colson from his office. "You can just get your ass out of my office," Weicker is reported to have said, "because you make me sick."

It has not been particularly favorable publicity. Colson, a lawyer and political operative who resigned as President Nixon's special counsel in March to go into private law practice in Washington, first had his name linked with the Watergate case two days after the June 17, 1972, break-in at the offices of the Democratic National Committee.

A reporter who called the White House and asked for Hunt was told by an operator that he might be in Colson's office.

Ever since that time, Colson has denied any involvement with the various illegal activities uncovered by the Watergate investigation, and has remained—even after leaving the White House—firmly on the side of the President, whom he has known personally since 1956.

He has said he is anxious to testify before the Senate Watergate committee that Mr. Nixon did not know about the high-level cover-



Ex-Nixon adviser Charles Colson (right) and Rep. Lucien Nedzi (D-Mich.) meet before House Intelligence subcommittee.

Associated Press

up of administration complicity in the scandal. The committee expects to call him later in the year.

It was his belief in the President's innocence, Colson said, that prompted him to grant an interview with ABC's Howard K. Smith on June 6. "I couldn't sit by any

longer idly, watching while the President of the United States was being tried in the press on third, fourth-hand hearsay, in opinion, on the wildest kind of charges," he said then.

Colson has vented similar anger at the press before. In November, 1972, he told a meeting of the Society of

New England Newspaper Editors that The Washington Post's Watergate reporting was "unconscionable" and that charges that the administration had subverted the political process were "fantasy."

Throughout his time in the White House, Colson functioned as a political op-

Scrap Publicity Tactic

erative and adviser for Mr. Nixon, a role that placed him in regular contact with others implicated in the Watergate affair and now makes him an object of interest to investigators concerned both with his own activities and those of others.

Like other former Nixon staff members — notably John W. Dean III, John D. Ehrlichman, H. R. (Bob) Haldeman and former Attorney General John N. Mitchell — he now finds himself pitted against some of those with whom he once worked closely.

By last November, Colson said a few weeks ago in an interview with the New York Times, he was convinced that "Mitchell had to be involved" in the cover-up and probably in planning the actual Watergate burglary.

He said he concluded this when Hunt told him the Watergate defendants, who had not yet been tried, were still receiving money from the Committee to Re-elect the President. He said he warned the President, but Mr. Nixon did not believe him until late in March.

Colson has not sought to implicate Haldeman or Ehrlichman in the Watergate affair, but he did tell the Times he was afraid they might "contrive a story against me."

In an FBI interview made public in the Pentagon Papers trial, however, Colson said he was ordered by Ehrlichman and Dean to keep

quiet about the burglary of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office—carried out by Hunt and G. Gordon Liddy the incident not become national security required that —after he learned about it. public, Colson told the FBI.

While at the White House, Colson developed a reputation as an expert in political dirty tricks—and as a hard-nose who once said in a widely-circulated memo that he would be "willing to walk my grandmother if necessary."

In 1970, for example, he planted a story with Life magazine reporter William Lambert alleging conflict of interest on the part of U.S. Sen. Joseph D. Tydings (D-Md.). Tydings lost the election, and though a subsequent report was widely interpreted as having cleared him, Colson maintained the story was justified and took credit for contributing to Tydings' defeat.

In testimony before a Washington grand jury—released at the Pentagon Papers trial—Hunt said Colson ordered him to forge State Department cables to implicate former President John F. Kennedy in the 1963 assassination of South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem, with the aim of leaking them to Lambert.

Colson, in sworn depositions, admitted telling Hunt to let Lambert see some classified cables, but denied telling him to produce a forgery.

He also has denied allega-

tions made to Watergate investigators by former White House intelligence agent John J. Caulfield that he suggested the burglary and firebombing of the Brookings Institution.

To those who have worked with him, Colson is a man with a sharp eye for specks of political gold in the material passing through the governmental mill. He'd be glad to find a better way to feed the poor, a former colleague has recalled, "but his top consideration would be how much political good the administration would get out of it."

To a Democratic attorney taking a deposition in a civil suit over the Watergate affair last summer, Colson responded: "If you can separate government and politics you're a better man than I am. I happen to think that politics is an honorable profession, and when you are successful in politics, you are governing."

A graduate of Brown (where he first met Hunt at an alumni gathering) and a former Marine, Colson came to Washington to work for former Sen. Leverett Saltonstall (R-Mass.) in 1956, when he was 25.

He has been in and out of politics since then, and served Mr. Nixon for three years with the title of special counsel—the job now held by J. Fred Buzhadt. He lives in McLean with his second wife, the former Patty Hughes, who also once worked for Saltonstall.