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*Washington Merry-Go-Round* by JACK ANDERSON

WASHINGTON — Not long after the November election, Watergate ringleader E. Howard Hunt telephoned Charles Colson in the White House and put the squeeze on him for money.

"The cheapest commodity available is money," said Hunt, reminding the presidential trouble-shooter that "we're protecting the guys who are really responsible."

Hunt complained about the paralysis inside the White House over Watergate. "I would hope," he said, "that . . . the people who were paralyzed initially by this within the White House could now start to give some creative thinking to the affair and some affirmative action, for Chrissake."

"That's true," agreed Colson.

"I think now is the time for it," pressed Hunt. "We expect it now, and we want it. The election is out of the way, the initial terror of a number of people has subsided. . . A few good people ought to really be able to concentrate on this and get the G— d— thing out of the way for once and for all. . . I don't want to bore you with what it's been like, but it hasn't been pleasant for any of us."

"J— Ch—, I know it," Colson sympathized. "I hope you're doing some writing to keep yourself busy."

"Oh, I am," said the spy-novelist, "I don't know if anything will ever come of it, but it's a good — it keeps my mind from my plight, let's put it that way."

Then Hunt got down to the purpose of his call. "One of the initial outputs that I have read about," he said, "is that while this is done by a bunch of wild-assed guys. . . well, that's fine for we're protecting the guys who are really responsible. . . and, of course, that's a continuing requirement."

"But at the same time, this is a two-way street. As I say and as I

said before, we think now is the time when the move should be made and surely the cheapest commodity available is money.

"These lawyers have not been paid: there are large sums of money outstanding. That's the principal thing. Living allowances which are due again on the 31st of the month, we want that stuff well in hand for some months in advance. I think these are all reasonable requests. They're all promised in advance and reaffirmed from time to time to my attorney and so forth. So, in turn, I've been giving commitments to the people who look to me."

"I'm reading you," replied Colson. "You don't have to be more specific."

"I don't want to belabor it."

"It isn't a question of that," said Colson. "It's just that the less specifics I know, the better off I am — we are, you are."

Hunt went on to say that Kenneth Parkinson, an attorney for the President's campaign committee, "is out of town until next Monday, at which time a memorandum is going to be laid on him and he is going to be made aware."

Then Hunt asked Colson: "Would you be willing to receive a memorandum from me? . . . I think it might help you."

"Except," objected Colson, "there are things you might not want to tell me."

"There's really nothing I don't want to tell you," said Hunt. "I would think you could receive this memorandum, read it and destroy it."

"Nope," Colson rejected the suggestion.

"You couldn't do that?" asked Hunt.

"Nope," Colson said again. "The reason I can't is the same reason your letter to me, when I got that and when I was asked by federal authorities had I had any communication and I said yes,

I've received this letter and here it is. . . You can't get in the position where you're perjuring."

"Of course not," Hunt agreed. "And I'm afraid John Mitchell already has done."

"The problem is, you see, I don't want to get in the position of knowing something that I don't now know." Colson emphasized, "for the reason that I want to be perfectly free to help you and the only way I can help you is to remain as completely unknowing as I am."

The two men then got into a discussion of the effect of Watergate on the presidential election.

"It kept them from the real issues," suggested Hunt, referring to the futile attempt by the Democrats to raise the Watergate scandal as an issue in the campaign.

"Well," responded Colson, "I've always thought when I write my memoirs of this campaign that I'm going to say that the Watergate was brilliantly conceived as an escapade that would divert the Democrats' attention from the real issues and, therefore, permitted us to win a landslide that we probably wouldn't have had otherwise. . ."

"Whether you believe it or not," said Hunt.

"No, listen," protested Colson, "I think there's a good bit of validity to that."

"I do, too," agreed Hunt.

"Dumb bastards were on an issue," said Colson, "the public couldn't care less about."

Footnote: The prosecutors have traced huge sums of money, which were delivered to Hunt and his late wife in \$100 bills. The prosecutors have evidence that Hunt, instead of passing it out to his fellow Watergate defendants, kept most of it himself. It's estimated that he still has more than \$100,000 of the Watergate cash stashed away.