

Ex-Aide to Nixon Tied to Smear Try

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A former presidential staff assistant acknowledged yesterday that he had been asked to provide information for the White House that could be used to discredit Sen. Lowell P. Weicker Jr. (R-Conn.), a member of the select Senate's Watergate investigating committee.

The ex-aide, Jack Gleason, said the requests had been initiated by Lawrence Higby, the principal assistant of former White House chief of staff H. R. Halde- man, and that Higby had pressed for information that would indicate Weicker had mishandled campaign contributions.

Gleason, who worked on campaign financing matters as a member of the White House staff, said Higby's requests for information to discredit Weicker were transmitted to him in March and April by Harry Dent, formerly one of President Nixon's principal political strategists and now an attorney in private practice in South Carolina.

"Both Harry and I agreed that this (Higby's request) was asinine, really stupid and neither of us gave him anything," said Gleason, now a partner in a Washington consulting firm.

In addition to the attempt to find damaging information on Sen. Weicker, the Watergate committee yesterday heard testimony that the White House initiated similar action—also involving Dent—to try to discredit committee chairman Sam Ervin (D-N.C.).

Sen. Daniel K. Inouye (D-Hawaii) read into the record an article from The Charlotte Observer stating that "high officials in the North

tried to interfere with the Carolina Republican Party, confirmed Wednesday (May 16) that H. R. (Bob) Halde- man . . . made two attempts to get local party officials to dig up something to discredit Ervin and blast him with it."

According to the sources quoted in the article, Halde- man placed two calls to Dent and asked Dent to re- lay the suggestion to the chairman of the state Re- publican Committee.

Dent could not be reached for comment yesterday, but Sen. Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.) sent the committee a letter yesterday stating that "Dent had been contacted but . . . declined to do any of that type research against Sen. Ervin."

During Sen. Inouye's questioning of former presi- dential counsel John W. Dean III yesterday, Dean testified about another ap- parent attempt to find dam- aging information, Ervin— this one allegedly involving White House special assist- ant William J. Baroody Jr.

According to Dean's testi- mony, Baroody told him that, as part of the White House "counter-offensive" against the Senate investiga- tion, "he was meeting with some people from North Carolina and they thought they may have some inter- esting information on the senator."

On Thursday, Sen. Weicker charged that the White House had attempted to smear him personally, as part of a continuing effort to impede the Senate committee's investigation and called on Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox to investigate the attempt to obtain in- formation indicating that he had mishandled campaign funds.

Specifically, Weicker ac- cused former presidential special counsel Charles W. Colson of continuing to spread the story and at- tempting to get it planted in newspapers, even after Col- son knew it to be false.

Colson, who has become the leading edge of Presi- dent Nixon's defense in the Watergate case, denied Thursday night that "I ever activities of the Senate com- mittee" and said he knows of "nothing improper with respect to any assistance Sen. Weicker received from any Republican organization in 1970."

The allegation that Weicker accused Colson of spreading involved contribu- tions made to the senator's 1970 campaign by the White House and held that Weicker had failed to prop- erly report receipt of the money.

Gleason, the former presi- dent staff assistant who was in charge of supervising such contributions for the White House in 1970, said yesterday that he received a telephone call from Dent on March 28 or 29 in which Dent said "Higby wants to know how much money Weicker got from the White House in 70 and was there anything illegal about it."

According to Gleason, "there was no question in my mind or Harry's" that the request represented an attempt by the White House to smear Weicker. "I said I couldn't remember how much money he received and that there was nothing illegal about it," Gleason said.