

Ehrlichman Account Links Election Aides to Break-In

7/11/73
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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 10 — John D. Ehrlichman, once one of President Nixon's closest advisers, has told Senate investigators that he believed shortly after the Watergate burglary that high officials of the President's re-election campaign had been involved in the operation.

But Mr. Ehrlichman, in an interview with the investigators on May 4, refused to say whether he told Mr. Nixon of his belief. Mr. Ehrlichman contended that the doctrine of executive privilege protected him from disclosing his conversations with the President. A 33-page summary of Mr. Ehrlichman's interview with the staff of the Senate Watergate committee was prepared by the staff afterward and was made available to The New York Times today.

The summary is written in narrative form, paraphrasing Mr. Ehrlichman's answers to the interrogator's questions.

Mr. Ehrlichman, who resigned as the President's chief domestic adviser four days before the interview in the wake of Watergate disclosures, denied any role in planning the burglary or in covering up the facts about it.

But Mr. Ehrlichman, in the words of the summary, acknowledged having made a conscious effort "to get as little knowledge as possible" in the months after the June 17, 1972, burglary at the Democratic national headquarters, because he knew he would have to testify in civil proceedings arising from the Watergate affair.

The former Presidential ad-

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viser also made the following points in his interview with the committee staff:

¶He approved payments to the Watergate defendants last July, but he did not know that the payments were intended to buy their silence or that the money had come from campaign funds.

¶He learned about the break-in at the office of Dr. Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist soon after it happened in September, 1971. Mr. Ehrlichman said that he had expressed dismay and disapproval over that burglary but did not report the incident to anyone else.

¶He attended a meeting at which "sensitive" documents from the safe of E. Howard Hunt Jr., one of the Watergate conspirators who pleaded guilty, were turned over to L. Patrick Gray 3d, then acting director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and he learned later that Mr. Gray had burned the files. But he said that he had not given Mr. Gray instructions to destroy the records.

¶He received a \$20,000 personal loan within the last year from Herbert W. Kalmbach, President Nixon's former personal lawyer, who raised money to give to the Watergate defendants.

Shift on Privilege

At the time of the staff interview with Mr. Ehrlichman in May, the White House position was that conversations between the President and his aides were covered by executive privilege and could not be related to Senate investigators.

That position has now changed, and Mr. Niron has said that his current and former aides should tell all they know to the investigators.

According to Senate officials, Mr. Ehrlichman has not been interrogated since the May interview. But they said that he would be questioned again before he testifies in public before the committee. Mr. Ehrlichman's public appearance is not

scheduled for at least two or three more weeks.

Mr. Ehrlichman told the interrogators that soon after the Watergate burglary he began to believe that Jeb Stuart Magruder, deputy director of the President's re-election campaign, and perhaps other high officials of the campaign had been involved in the burglary.

Mr. Ehrlichman said that he had had at least two group meetings with top Presidential advisers about the involvement of campaign officials. Among those at the meetings, according to Mr. Ehrlichman, were Clark MacGregor, the campaign director after July 1, 1972; H. R. Haldeman, former White House Chief of Staff; Charles W. Colson, a Presidential counselor; Bryce Harlow and Fred V. Malek, ranking campaign advisers, and possibly Ronald L. Ziegler, the President's press secretary.

'Get to Bottom of It'

Mr. Ehrlichman, according to the interview summary, contended that throughout these meetings "I was urging that we should get to the bottom of it. If there was any responsibility at any level at the committee it was time to make a clean breast of it."

But Mr. Ehrlichman said that his view had been rejected because of the opposition of Mr. MacGregor and John N. Mitchell, who had resigned as campaign director on July 1 but who still acted as an adviser.

Mr. MacGregor, in a telephone interview today, said Mr. Ehrlichman's assertions were "utterly ridiculous," and divorced from reason or vestige of the truth.

All during that period, he said, it was he who held news conferences on the basis of "what Ehrlichman and others told me" about the matter. He was, he said with anger in his voice, "incensed" by Mr. Ehrlichman's allegation that he had promoted a cover-up.

Mr. Mitchell did not touch directly on this point during his public testimony before the

Watergate Committee today. But he said repeatedly that it had been his view that no information about the Watergate affair should be offered voluntarily and that officials should "keep the lid on" so that previous covert White House operations were not disclosed.

According to the summary, Mr. Ehrlichman said that Mr. Haldeman's reaction to the suggestion of "making a clean breast of it" was "neutral."

Money for Defendants

On the matter of providing money to the Watergate defendants, Mr. Ehrlichman told the investigators that John W. Dean 3d, then the President's counsel, came to him several weeks after the Watergate break-in and told him that Mr. Mitchell wanted Mr. Ehrlichman's approval for Mr. Kalmbach to raise attorneys' fees for the men who were in jail.

Mr. Ehrlichman said that Mr. Dean had told him that Mr. Mitchell was "very anxious to have Kalmbach's help."

Mr. Mitchell said today that he had played a rather passive role in arranging for Mr. Kalmbach to raise money for the defendants.

Mr. Ehrlichman told the investigators that he believed the money was to be raised to pay lawyers' fees. He said that he had had no idea that the money was intended as a payoff in return for the defendants' silence or that the money was to come from campaign contributions.

Deposition Expected

Mr. Mitchell took the same position in his public testimony today, saying that he thought the money was for a legitimate defense fund.

Mr. Ehrlichman confirmed in his staff interview that Hugh W. Sloan Jr., the former campaign treasurer, had tried soon after the burglary to tell Mr. Ehrlichman what he knew about the financing of the Watergate operation.

But Mr. Ehrlichman said that

he had told Mr. Sloan to tell his story to the authorities, not to him.

"I had been advised I was going to be deposed," Mr. Ehrlichman told the Senate staff, referring to the fact that he would be expected to give a deposition in a civil suit stemming from the Watergate affair.