

Excerpts From Ehrlichman's Testimony

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WASHINGTON, July 24—
Following are excerpts from
the transcript of testimony
by John Ehrlichman today on
the 27th day of hearings on
the Watergate case before
the Senate Select Committee
on Presidential Campaign
Activities:

WEDNESDAY, JULY 25, 1973

Before Senate Committee

MORNING SESSION

C 27

on Watergate

MR. EHRlichman: Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee, at the time of my resignation I assured the President as I had intended to spend such time and personal resources as I had in the statement of the truth of these matters now before this committee. I have willingly and fully testified before several other official inquiries.

Because I sincerely do not believe I am guilty of any wrongdoing, I have not invoked the Fifth Amendment, nor have I attempted to negotiate "immunity" for myself from anyone. Thus, I will try to fully answer all questions put to me by the committee within the new executive privilege guidelines.

I welcome this opportunity to lay out the facts and publicly set the record straight on a number of questions. One of these questions have been legitimately raised. Others are created by leaks to the press, falsehoods and misunderstandings.

I am here to refute every charge of illegal conduct on my part which has been made during the course of these hearings, including material leaked to the news media. What I say here will not be new but it may be different from what you have been reading in the papers.

It has been repeatedly said that this is not a trial; that the committee will recommend legislation, not assess guilt or innocence. At the same time, the soundness and integrity of the President, his staff and many close associates have been impugned and directly put in issue here. Many important questions about the White House, the Presidency, and its staff system have also been asked here, but not answered. I hope and believe I can contribute a few of those answers and also perhaps some measure of perspective.

it is there that street violence and civil rights and relations with Russia and their effect on China and the Cambodian military situation and a thousand other factors and events are brought together on the surface of one desk and must be resolved.

Events of '69 and '70

Some of these events in 1969 and 1970 included hundreds of bombings of public buildings in this country, a highly organized attempt to shut down the Federal Government, which you will all remember, intensive harassment of political candidates and violent street demonstrations which endangered life and property.

Taken as isolated incidents these events were serious. Taken as part of an apparent campaign to force upon the President a foreign policy favorable to the North Vietnamese and their allies, these demonstrations were more than just a garden variety exercise of the First Amendment.

Just as, and because, they affected the President's ability to conduct foreign policy, they required the President's attention and concern. Had he and his staff been ignorant of the significance of such a campaign, or merely indifferent, they, that is the President and his

staff, would have been subject to the proper criticism of all citizens interested in securing a stable peace in Southeast Asia and the return of our P.O.W.s.

But the President did understand these events to be important in the over-all foreign policy picture and they received balanced attention along with other events and factors.

In 1969, when he first came into office, the President took this nation into a new international era in which the stakes were extremely high. From close observation I can testify that the President is

'Fear and Paranoia'

Mr. Dean began his statement with a somewhat superficial but gallery-pleasing repetition of the old story about fear and paranoia in the Nixon White House. Why, Mr. Dean wondered, was there all that overplayed concern about hippies coming to Washington to march peacefully down Pennsylvania Avenue? Mr. Dean's explanation is simply that we were all suffering from some advanced forms of neurosis, and nothing else—some strange White House madness. He suggests he was the only sane one in the bunch.

Since he began his statement there, let me take up that subject briefly. I submit that on his general subject there are some realities of governmental life to be weighed in your deliberations.

From its first days, the Nixon Administration sought a stable peace abroad and a return of our P.O.W.'s from Southeast Asia; to get these results required the President to undertake foreign policy moves and initiatives which were completely inter-related and extremely delicate. In pursuit of this result we necessarily gave earnest attention to the staffing of critical Government positions with people loyal to the President's objectives. And the problems of leaks, demonstrations, bombings and terrorism, public opinion and Congressional support were understandably on the President's mind.

Today, the Presidency is the only place in the nation where all the conflicting considerations of domestic and international politics, economics and society merge:

not paranoid, weird, psychotic on the subject of demonstrators or hypersensitive to criticism. He is an able, tough, international politician, practical, complex, able to integrate many diverse elements and to see the interrelationships of minute and apparently disassociated particles of information and events.

Why didn't everyone know all about Watergate?

Shrinkage of Perspective

It has been my experience that, in the trial of a long lawsuit with a great number of witnesses, it becomes hard for the lawyers, witnesses, judge and jury to remember that anything else ever happened in the community back at the time of the disputed event except that event itself. I sense some of that shrinkage of perspective in some of the questions here, and in some of the comments of the network people on the television.

Here is what appears to be this great big thing, a burglary, a "cover up," "horrors," all going on, and witness after witness goes over the exquisite details of a few meetings, phone calls, memos, and conversations, day after day here. One begins to think, surely all of this could not possibly have passed unseen by anyone of even average awareness. How, then, could people on the White House staff have failed to know all of these so-obvious and often repeated and significant details, and failed to blow the whistle on the wrongdoings long before the ninth month?

John Dean said one thing in his testimony false as all the other falsehoods there, when he said.

The Watergate was probably the major thing that was occurring at this point in time," meaning in the context of Senator Baker's question, in the White House between June 17 and Sept. 15, 1972.

I do not suggest that we were all just too busy to have noticed. We did notice and we kept informed through John Dean and other sources on the assumption that he was giving us complete and accurate information.

But it is important to know that in today's White House, there must be, and there is, a heavy delegation of responsibility and duties.

Presidential Liaison

This narrative goes to the question: How could all of this have been avoided?

And it goes to the impor-

tant point that a chain of delegation is only as strong as its weakest link.

Because I once was counsel to the President and I know what the President has delegated to the one who holds that post, specifically, in this case, John Dean.

Aside from being the President's liaison to the departments and agencies concerned with legal matters, the counsel to the President is supposed to be the "conscience of the White

House." It is his job to keep a sharp eye out for wrongdoing, such as potential conflicts of interest, to insure that Presidential appointees cannot put personal interest ahead of the interest of the public in governmental matters. He reviews the F.B.I. checks of all potential appointees for such problems. He keeps abreast of legal and other questions which are before the executive branch, to be able to answer questions when asked by the President or his staff, he reviews documents before they go to the President for signing.

In addition, he is a conduit for all kinds of miscellaneous information relating to Federal law and regulatory agencies, logistical technicalities and legislation. It is his job to keep the White House informed of a whole raft of subjects within these general areas. And, perhaps most important, he must be a self-starter. He must take the initiative because in the Nixon White House there is no one else who is going to have the time to supervise, make assignments, decide what should be looked into. Everyone else is fully occupied with his own area of responsibility.

Thus, the counsel is a vital link in a chain of delegation. In my view one in that position must bring to the job sufficient training and experience to know what to do and when to do it.

The counsel also has had political duties. The President is the nation's chief executive. But he is also, by longstanding tradition, his political party's leader. Any President has a political role to play, whether he is going to run for re-election or not. But if he is a candidate, then he is both an executive and a practicing politician. Every such politician wants information. And the President, in his politician role is no different from the others. He

needs and wants information about issues, supporters, opponents and every other political subject known to man.

Ulasewicz's Role Defined

For the year 1969, to 1970, when I left the post of counsel, I attempted to gather some purely political information for the President, as I was expected to do. Out of real concern for the proprieties, I attempted to use only conventional non-Governmental sources of information. As one might hire political aides in a political campaign, Tony Ulasewicz was hired to do this chore of information gathering. He was paid from existing Nixon political money, by check, under an appropriate employer's tax number. Among other assignments, he scouted the potential opposition for vulnerability. So far as I am aware, during my tenure as counsel, Mr. Ulasewicz conducted his assignments legally and properly in all respects.

As liaison [after becoming assistant for domestic affairs in early 1970] to the domestic operating departments and agencies I frequently carried to them the President's expressions of criticism and suggestions for change. To the uninformed this undoubtedly would appear to create tensions between a Cabinet Secretary and me. But, actually, I think I maintained a good and frequent contact and good relations with our domestic secretaries, including the several Attorneys General, over my three years in this position. I confess I did not always bring them good

news, but then that was not my job. They and I share a mutual objective, I think, and that was to do all we could to help the President accomplish his stated goals.

As many here know, not everyone in the executive branch in the first term shared these goals. There were a number of holdovers in the executive branch who actively opposed the President's policies, especially his foreign policy, but also in the area of domestic affairs I can assure you.

Unauthorized Leaks

These people conducted a kind of internal guerrilla warfare against the President during the first term, trying to frustrate his goals by unauthorized leaks of part of the facts of a story, or of military and other aspects,

or by just plain falsehood. The object was to create hostility in the Congress and abroad and to affect public opinion.

Henry Kissinger, Secretary Rogers, and others were seriously concerned that this kind of internal sabotage of Administration policy could actually ruin our chances to negotiate a strategic arms limitation treaty and terminate the Vietnam situation on a stable basis, for example. A similar threat to a good result in Vietnam was posed by the combination of street demonstrations, terrorism-violence and their effect on public and Congressional support for the President's policy.

In his 1960 campaign, Mr. Nixon was involved in every minute detail. In 1968 when he invited me to work in the 1968 campaign to manage the campaign I agreed to manage the campaign tour only after securing his promise that he would completely delegate detailed control of the advance work, logistics and schedule. And his participation in those details was minimal in 1968.

In 1972 with the foreign situation as it was, the President decided quite early that he simply could not and would not involve himself in the day-to-day details of the Presidential primaries, the convention and the campaign. He made a very deliberate effort to detach himself from the day-to-day strategic and tactical problems. And so the regular work of the White House relating to Government and the nation's problems continued unabated. If anything, we on the domestic side were busier with the President on governmental business than in other years.

In 1972, the President had to delegate most of his political role and it went to people not otherwise burdened with governmental duties. As a result, I personally saw very little of the campaign activity during the spring and early summer of 1972. The President asked me to be sure that the campaign organization and the national committee said or did nothing inconsistent with Administration policy. And so I had a few meetings, with the C.R.P. people to explain existing domestic policy, that is, on campaign issues.

I began to spend more time with Ron Ziegler, press secretary at the White House, in the late spring of 1972, helping him to understand the

campaign issues, reviewing the research with him, etc. It became more important than ever for me to keep ahead of developments and in this connection I asked Mr. Dean to inform me as early as possible of significant changes, or new events in the Watergate case, so Ron Ziegler and

I could deal with new issues which would be arising in the press. It was for this purpose that I talked to Dean about Watergate in most instances.

In addition, the President formed an advisory group which met twice a week to look at the campaign in overview, at long range, and to discuss any needed changes. Attending these Monday and Thursday morning meetings were Clark MacGregor, John Mitchell, Bob Haldeman, Bryce Harlow, Charles Colson and I. Presumably, I was the substantive issue man in the group. Since Watergate was a campaign issue it was discussed in these meetings; it was never a major subject of discussion, however, and if anyone in the group knew more than the others he didn't share his secrets there.

Legislative Issues Cited

During the summer and fall of 1972 there were tough legislative issues which took the President's time and ours in great quantities. Busing, water quality, Phase 2 of the economic program, and welfare reform are, I know, subjects familiar to you all. They were critical issues to the Senate as they were to the President.

Federal Government over-spending was also a hot issue and we were engaged in documenting a catalogue of bad Federal spending programs to justify the Congressional repeal or reduction of a great many programs that spent great sums of Federal money with little or no benefit to the public. During those months, along with a great many others, we were trying to understand Senator McGovern's \$1,000-a-year welfare plan and figure out its true cost, and we were researching and analyzing about 20 other major campaign issues ranging from tax reform to the death penalty. These issues were being framed between the two candidates as the campaign went on.

We were checking into the propriety of grain sales which had been challenged.

The President negotiated with the new Japanese Prime Minister for two days in Ha-

wai in September. I made that trip with him.

Other pressing issues the President and the White House staff were at work on, the Presidential campaign aside, included air highjacking, a ceiling on Federal spending, Post Office problems, unemployment, surface transportation, Government property disposal, the revision of the system for classification of secret documents, environmental problems: air, water, pesticides, grazing, etc., flood damage rehabilitation, and countless other issues.

As my log will show I spent considerable time every week with the press, attempting to explain and outline for the media the President's domestic goals and programs.

From June to September, 1972, my staff and I put in long days, the convention platform having imposed additional burdens on some of us. After the convention, the speeches, position papers and political statements and releases kept the pressure on us. It was a very busy time.

Domestic Issues Stressed

John Dean, on the other hand, never found things so quiet and he planned the most expensive honeymoon in the history of the White House staff right along this period.

The committee has had the log of how I spent my office time over the years.

The logs for these two offices, Mr. Haldeman's and mine, demonstrate clearly the frequency of my meetings with Mr. Dean.

Remember: Dean testified that keeping Watergate covered up was a tremendous drain of my time and told of all the conferences and meetings I have, having with him about it. Let's be clear: I did not cover up anything to do with Watergate. Nor were Mr. Dean and I keeping steady company during all these weeks.

I have compiled our meetings in two week periods from June 17th through the election, the critical period, presumably, for a total of 22.

Various Subjects Covered

Of the total 22 contacts, two related to Presidential papers and testamentary planning, one related to convention planning, one related to grain sales, two on general campaign planning, one regarding the President's finan-

cial statement to be released, one regarding settlement of the Common Cause lawsuit. Of the remainder not all were devoted to talk about aspects of Watergate, I am certain.

Now, again, on this Siamese twin business, Mr. Haldeman and I had vastly different duties, areas and methods of operation.

I had a number of talks with Mr. Dean about Watergate, largely to keep posted on the campaign issues which I never had occasion to mention to Mr. Haldeman, but about which I talked to others, Mr. Ziegler, for example.

I simply want to make the point without overdrawing it, that Mr. Haldeman and I lived very separate lives and careers in and out of the office, Mr. Dean to the contrary notwithstanding.

The vast percentage of my working time was spent on substantive issues and domestic policy. About one-half of 1 per cent was spent on politics, the campaign and the events with which you have been concerning yourself as a committee. That is the context in which I hope you will receive this testimony.

Similarly, you must measure the President's role in all of this in true perspective. The 1972 campaign, the Watergate and its investigation competed for his attention with the claims of hundreds of members of Congress, economists, diplomats, educators, scientists, labor leaders, businessmen and countless other citizens, and with the demands of the problems of the nation in their manifold and compound complexities, with the daily mail and the endless meetings, the speeches and other communication with the public, with the need for management, leadership, inspiration and the need and desire for the time to study and think. I see redeeming aspects in this process.

I have faith that good can result from this committee's efforts. In the future, participants in political campaigns will surely be aware of the history of this time. And the standards which they will wish to impose upon themselves will be the product of the lessons of that history, whatever it may turn out to be. I have great optimism that the lessons of the history of this era will bring only good for this country.

MR. DASH: Mr. Ehrlichman, during the 1960 campaign, when you were

working with Mr. Haldeman and also for President Nixon as an advance man, is it true that you were serving to some extent as an undercover agent, sort of stalking Mr. Rockefeller?

A. No, that was a prior episode. During the primaries, in the pre-convention period of that 1960 campaign, Mr. Finch, who then was on the Vice President's staff—President Nixon then being Vice President—asked me if I would go to North Dakota and observe Governor Rockefeller's efforts to rejuvenate a then-abandoned Presidential aspiration. He had been running, he decided not to, he decided to get back in, and he was making a tour of the Midwest to see if he could pick up some convention

delegates. So I went there for that purpose.

Q. And what role did you play when you went to North Dakota? A. Well, other than being a driver in Governor Rockefeller's motorcade, I was simply an observer.

Q. How did you obtain that position as a driver in the motorcade? A. Through mutual friends.

Q. I take it that you were considered part of Mr. Rockefeller's entourage? A. Well, I don't imagine that it really occurred to anybody to ask.

Q. Who were you reporting to at that time? A. Mr. Finch.

Q. Now, in the '68 campaign, did you play any role in the political campaign? A. I was the tour director.

Tour Director's Function

Q. And what function did the tour director have? A. Well, that is largely dealing with problems of scheduling, advancing and logistics. And the care and feeding of the press.

Q. Now, were you aware of the fact that by the summer of 1970 Mr. Haldeman and the President had felt a need for an improved intelligence system with regard to domestic dissent or internal security?

A. Well, I was aware of the feeling of the need and I shared it. I was aware of a proposal which eventually, I believe, was put into effect to establish a small office in the Justice Department to collate and coordinate and bring together in one place what the various law enforcement agencies, both in and out of the Federal Government, knew about these terrorism bombings and the

street violence and these other activities that going on around the country because it looked then like there really was a pattern, and that it was a coordinated, planned and executed thing.

These things went in waves from one part of the country to the other and it appeared that if what the police knew, for instance, in the city of New York could be shared with the police in other parts of the country, that you would get a whole lot better response to this kind of law-breaking.

So under Mr. Mardian's aegis this effort was made to bring together the things that were known to all of the law enforcement people around the country.

Q. All right. Now did you know about the Huston plan [for internal security, approved by the President in 1970 and canceled a few days later].

A. I did not know about the Huston plan until I was invited to attend a meeting that I think has been previously referred to here in the President's office, attended by Admiral Gayler and J. Edgar Hoover and the heads of the various intelligence agencies, where this proposal was announced.

An Accomplished Fact

Q. What was the stage of that proposal at this point, announced as a proposal that would go forward? A. I gathered it was an accomplished fact.

Q. Yes. Did you know what the proposal was about? A. Just from what I heard at that meeting. I had not seen that write-up.

Q. Did you know that the proposal included removal of certain restrictions on break-ins, surreptitious entry or

wiretapping? A. No, I do not believe that was discussed at the meeting.

Q. It never came to your attention that was in the plan? A. No, it did not.

Q. Mr. Haldeman, who played an important role in working on the plan and having it recommended to the President, never discussed those aspects of the plan with you? A. No, nobody discussed any aspects of the plan with me.

Q. Why were you called to the meeting? A. Well, I do not know that. There were quite a few spare characters at the meeting from the White House staff and I was simply there to get information.

Q. Were you asked to express an opinion? A. No.

Q. So far as you know, the



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Lorne Green, the actor, and his wife following the statement of John D. Ehrlichman yesterday morning

plan was approved? A. That was the tenor of the meeting.

Q. Did you ever hear of anything else about the plan? A. Yes, I heard that the director of the F.B.I. in effect, scuttled it by his objection to it, with the support of the Attorney General.

Q. Did you know why he objected to it?

Q. Do you know why he objected to it? A. I do not think I ever knew with any particularity why. It was pretty obvious that he was losing a good deal of sovereignty and the bureau was going to be asked to enter into intelligence. Gathering activities that the director did not want it in and I assumed that that was the basis for his objection.

Q. In other words, your

assumption was that Mr. Hoover objected to the plan because it invaded his territory rather than because it had any parts to it that dealt with more surreptitious entry or wiretapping? A. I am not your best witness on this, Mr. Dash. It was purely an assumption on my part and I do not think anybody ever told me.

No Inquiry Made

Q. You never sought to inquire why a plan that you saw at a meeting was being approved and would go forward was being ditched because of Mr. Hoover's objection? You never sought to inquire as to why? A. It was so far out of my bailiwick at that time that I just had no occasion.

Q. Was it out of your bailiwick to be interested in the gathering of political intelli-

gence? A. At that time, yes.

Q. Now, did there come a time when it did not be outside your bailiwick? A. Well, it had been my bailiwick when I was counsel. As assistant for domestic affairs, I had very little occasion to be involved in questions of political intelligence or political anything, for that matter.

Q. Well, after the Huston plan did not go forward, were you assigned a role to create in the White House a capability for intelligence-gathering at any time? A. I do not know quite what you are getting at. If you are getting at the special unit and the problems of leaks—

Q. I do not know why you have to find out what I am getting at, if you just answer my question as I ask it. A. It is an obscure question.

Q. It is a simple question.