

Tough-Guy Image Is Absent

In Contrast to Ehrlichman, Haldeman Comes On as Congenial

By William Greider
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Haldeman and Ehrlichman, two of friends who became the White House gemini of the Watergate mystery, whose names are twinned as a popular symbol of remote power, appeared back-to-back yesterday with earnest pleas in defense of their public service and their leader, President Nixon.

"I am confident," John D. Ehrlichman concluded after five days of testimony before the Senate investigating committee, "that the truth is there to be seen—it only needs the seers."

A few minutes later, his old associate, H. R. (Bob) Haldeman, was seated before the same senators, reminding the national television audience of the vast accomplishments of the Nixon administration that are now obscured by the Watergate headlines.

"The harmless eye of a fly, viewed under a microscope, can become a terrifying object," Haldeman observed. Just so with Water-

gate, he suggested, an episode which occupied a fraction of 1 per cent of his time when he was Mr. Nixon's chief of staff, the top bird in the White House pecking order.

But Haldeman, as he read through his prepared statement for two hours, rather undermined the heavy popular image which has grown up around him—the stern Prussian whose humorless manner struck junior assistants and Cabinet officers alike with terror. With his crew cut and gentle blue eyes and a voice to match, Haldeman seemed too soft and congenial for the tough-guy role that others have assigned to him.

Especially after Ehrlichman. His old associate, a college chum from UCLA days, was unrelenting and tenacious as a witness, fending off the hostile assumptions from his interrogators, touching off angry spats among the weary senators and lawyers. His cold smile only softened at the end, when the questions were over and he asked for a few minutes to sum up.

Ehrlichman took off his half-lens glasses and looked, not at the seven senators and their lawyers, but into the network television cameras off to his left. He recalled that Gordon Strachan, one of those former White House aides caught in the Watergate mire, had testified near tears the other day that young people should "stay away" from government service, but John Ehrlichman disagrees.

"If some young Americans know their ideals or ideas or motives are sounder or purer than those of the people now in politics or government," he said, "then I think Gordon should have said to them: 'Come and do better. Don't stay away.'"

The White House staff members around Mr. Nixon have been criticized for their loyalty and some say over-zealousness. By inference, Ehrlichman spoke up for them:

"Somehow in politics and government, it seems there is always someone to fill the job. If you don't take it, you

can be sure that someone else will. We are either going to have highly motivated, able people running the political campaigns and filling the offices in government, or we will surely have seat-warmers and hacks who will fill these places. . ."

But Ehrlichman, who came east from a law practice in Seattle to run domestic affairs in the Nixon White House, suggested his own bitter warning for the dedicated who choose public service in Washington. Perhaps it reflected the bruised spots in his own personal experience of the last four years.

"But young Americans," he said, "if you do come, come with your eyes wide open. If you go to work for a President in the executive branch, there are very few in the Congress or media that are going to throw rosebuds at you.

"If you favor change in what our government is and what it does in our society, you'll have to fight for it. No such change has been won here by default, at least not recently.

"And be prepared to de-



By Bob Burchette—The Washington Post

Among the spectators at the Senate Watergate hearings: Jeffrey Rogers, son of the Secretary of State, and his wife.

find your sense of values when you come here, too. You'll encounter a local culture which scoffs at patriotism and family and morality just as it adulates the opposite. And you'll find some people who have fallen for that line. But you'll also find in politics and government many great people ..."

Ehrlichman finished on a graceful note and Sen. Howard Baker, the Republican vice chairman of the Watergate committee, picked it up. Young people should realize, he suggested, that "truly and surely the system of government in the United States is examining itself and that's proof of its strength and not of its weakness."

Haldeman, who is always billed as Mr. Tough, came to the witness chair with a pleasant mien. He did not get to the interrogation which promises to be thorough, but his tone was more congenial than anything his old partner displayed in five days on the griddle.

"One of the great tragedies," he said, "is the cloud that hangs over the accomplishments of the last four years and perhaps the next four years." Even his enemies who suspect the worst about him could agree to the truth of that.

Haldeman's prepared testimony was studded with some sensational material. He gave his account of what is revealed on two disputed tape recordings of presidential conversations—tapes denied to the Senate committee and to the Justice Department's special prosecutor.

And Haldeman leveled a broad accusation against the Democrats for complicity in all sorts of violence—from tire-slashing to fire bombs to indecent exposure—directed at the President's 1972 campaign, but not pursued by the media or the investigators.

But then he also offered an apology. If the "dirty tricks" crew which he helped set up did indeed distribute slanderous letters, as they are charged, then Haldeman deplored it.

"On behalf of everyone associated with the Nixon campaign, I would like to and do apologize," he said.