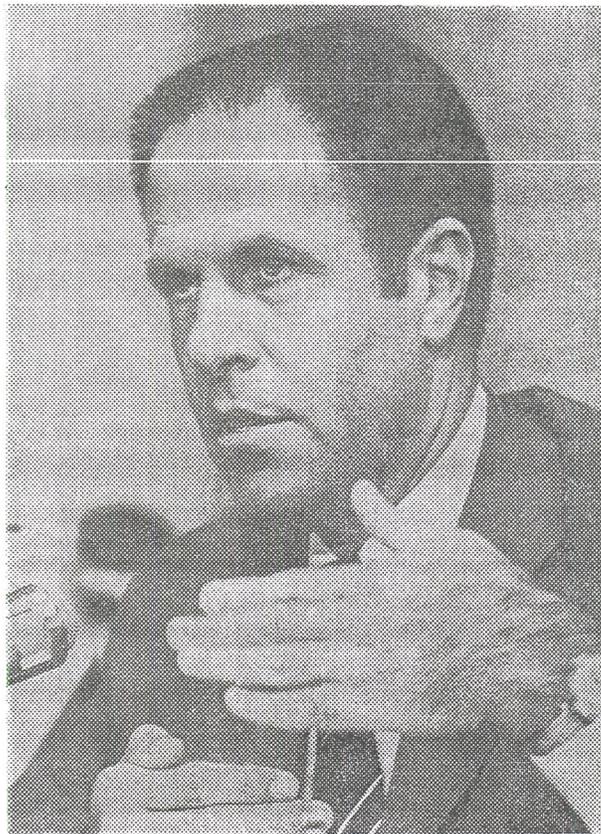


# HALDEMAN CHALLENGED BY PANEL ON VERSION OF CONTENTS OF TAPES; NIXON ALONE TO DECIDE ON ACCESS



The New York Times/George Tames

H. R. Haldeman discussing Presidential tapes at hearing

*in complete*  
**SENATORS IRATE**

## Ervin Sees a 'Planned Action to Leak a Version of Talks

By JAMES M. NAUGHTON

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 31—The Senate Watergate committee challenged, in terms of alarm and indignation, the testimony today of H. R. Haldeman about the contents of secret White House recordings of President Nixon's Watergate conversations.

Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr., the chairman of the investigating committee, asserted that Mr. Haldeman's testimony was part

*Excerpts from the testimony are on Pages 21 and 22.*

of a "planned action" by the White House to "leak" a favorable version of the taped conversations.

Several of the North Carolina Democrat's colleagues joined him in expressing resentment that the President had denied them access to the recordings, but had permitted Mr. Haldeman to take one of them home after resigning from his post as the White House chief of staff last April 30.

### Left in a Closet

And one member of the committee expressed concern that the tape might have been altered when he elicited from Mr. Haldeman a concession that the former Presidential aide

had left it in a closet for two days.

Mr. Haldeman insisted, in his second appearance before the Senate panel, that he was trying to be "as accurate as I can" in recounting the taped discussions between the President and John W. Dean 3d, the dismissed White House legal counsel and chief witness against the President.

Mr. Haldeman said that he was "very much aware that my accuracy in attempting to describe the contents of those tapes is subject to verification" if the Senators or the Government's special Watergate prosecutor, Archibald Cox, should obtain a Federal court order granting access to the President's tapes.

Mr. Haldeman disclosed as he began his testimony yesterday that President Nixon asked him in April to listen to the recording of a March 21 discussion with Mr. Dean and permitted him earlier this month—as a private citizen—to play back at his home the tape of a conversation last Sept. 15

Continued on Page 20, Column 6

were clearly more interested in the controversial tape recordings.

The vice chairman of the committee, Senator Howard H. Baker Jr., Republican of Tennessee, told Mr. Haldeman that he shared Senator Ervin's concern that the testimony had placed the committee in a "strange situation." And Mr. Baker said it had "heightened" his own determination to gain access to the tapes.

Furthermore, Senator Daniel K. Inouye, Democrat of Hawaii, drew from Mr. Haldeman late today the disclosure that he had left the Sept. 15 tape at his Washington home—in a box in a closet — about 48 hours.

"Is it possible that this tape, during those 48 hours, could have been doctored?" Senator Inouye asked.

"I don't believe it is possible," Mr. Haldeman replied.

#### Took Other Tapes

He also told Mr. Inouye that, on the day he left the Sept. 15 tape at his home, the President made available to him an unspecified number of other tapes. Mr. Haldeman said he took them home, but decided that it would be improper to listen to conversations in which he had not been a participant, and so returned all the tapes to the White House around July 11.

Senator Ervin's angry denunciation of the testimony on the contents of the tapes—which he had insisted yesterday on receiving from Mr. Haldeman — appeared to have been prompted in part by the discovery that Mr. Haldeman's attorney, John J. Wilson, advised the President's counsel last Sunday that Mr. Haldeman was likely to have to testify about the contents.

The Senator said he was forced to infer that there had been "a little bit of collaboration" between Mr. Haldeman and the White House and, at one point, he told Mr. Wilson, "It just shows there has been a little [of] what we call in North Carolina 'canoodling together.'"

#### 'A Simple Principle'

Mr. Wilson replied that he had merely consulted with J. Fred Buzhardt, the special White House counsel, "on a simple principle, and that was to what extent they would permit us to disclose" the contents of the tapes. Mr. Wilson insisted, as did Mr. Haldeman, that the White House did not know until Mr. Haldeman sat at the witness table late yesterday what he would testify.

Mr. Haldeman told the Senators yesterday, as he read an 89-page prepared statement denying that he or Mr. Nixon had taken part in the Watergate break-in or cover-up, that he was ordered by the President not to disclose any discussions he had heard on the tapes but had not heard in person. But Mr. Haldeman added that he had a prepared "addendum" he could read, revealing the contents of the taped conversations, if the committee insisted. The committee did insist and Mr. Haldeman read the addendum.

In addition, Mr. Wilson gave the Senators a letter from Mr. Buzhardt yesterday, stating that Mr. Haldeman was "asked to

the tapes were in the president's "sole" custody and that none of them had been or ever would be transcribed.

"Here a witness appears and makes them public just a few days after that," the Senator said. He added:

"Should we infer that the private word of the White House becomes 'inoperative' a few days after it is given?"

Mr. Haldeman replied that the White House had only been consulted about the "dilemma" that the witness faced regarding the tapes.

But Senator Ervin declared that "the clear indication is that White House counsel wanted Mr. Haldeman to reveal his interpretation of the tapes to the public."

#### Tapes Viewed as Crucial

The committee regards the tapes as central to an ultimate determination of President Nixon's involvement, if any, in the Watergate cover-up.

Mr. Dean testified last month that he first became persuaded of Mr. Nixon's involvement in the cover-up at a meeting last Sept. 15. The former White House counsel said the president had congratulated him for his efforts to assure that no one would be indicted by a Federal grand jury except the seven original Watergate defendants.

Mr. Dean also alleged that he sought unsuccessfully last March 21 to persuade the president that the cover-up must end and that it was "a cancer growing on the Presidency."

Mr. Haldeman testified yesterday—and clung today to the assertion—that the tapes of the Sept. 15 and March 21 meetings did not support Mr. Dean's testimony. He said that, to the contrary, the tapes authenticated Mr. Nixon's declaration of innocence.

The president said last week that the tapes supported his position but that portions of them might be misinterpreted by persons who had perspectives or motives different from his.

Thus, Senator Ervin contended today, "the committee might interpret the tapes in quite a different way from the way Mr. Haldeman has interpreted them." He added, "I am going to have to confess that I am going to be rather scrupulous in considering whether I should accept Mr. Haldeman's interpretation."

#### Weicker Voices Concern

Senator Lowell P. Weicker Jr., Republican of Connecticut, said that his concern about the tapes was more basic. He maintained that it was "grossly unfair" to other potential defendants in the Watergate case to be denied access to the recordings when Mr. Haldeman had been permitted to hear them.

And Senator Herman E. Talmadge, Democrat of Georgia, asked Mr. Haldeman why "a private citizen"—as Mr. Haldeman is now—should be "more entitled to listen to those tapes than a Senate committee of the Congress of the United States."

It was, Mr. Haldeman said, "a question that I cannot answer" except to say that he had listened to them as a "means of reporting to the president" what they contained.

Mr. Haldeman had the reputation among the White House