

Final Nixon planned clemency for Hunt

Final 5-11-19-74

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former President Richard M. Nixon planned a publicity buildup to pave the way to grant executive clemency to E. Howard Hunt Jr. on the day Hunt went on trial for the Watergate burglary, according to a White House tape made public for the first time Monday.

"Hunt's is a simple case," Nixon told Charles W. Colson, a special counsel who had interceded for Hunt, a college friend.

"We'll build that son-of-a-bitch up like nobody's business," Nixon said. "We'll have Buckley write a column and say, you, that he, that he should have

clemency, if you've given 18 years of services."

The tapes of that conversation and several others were played for the jury Monday at the Watergate cover-up trial of former Nixon lieutenants H. R. Haldeman, John D. Ehrlichman, John N. Mitchell and reelection committee aides Robert C. Mardian and Kenneth W. Parkinson.

More than two months after the Jan. 8, 1973, conversation and repeatedly thereafter, Nixon denied that he had authorized clemency to be offered to Hunt or any other of the sevenman burglary team because, as he told

former White House counsel John Dean, "It would be wrong."

Nixon's talk with Colson was later in the afternoon on Jan. 8, the first day of jury selection for the trial of Hunt, G. Gordon Liddy, James W. McCord Jr., and four others charged in the Watergate break-in and bugging.

Three days later on Jan. 11, after the prosecution had outlined its case, Hunt pleaded guilty to all six counts in the indictment against him. He later was sentenced to 2½ to 8 years in prison.

The conversation showed that Nixon wanted to give Hunt clemency because of information involving the White House

that he might reveal at the trial and before investigating bodies.

Some two months earlier, in November 1972, Hunt had demanded money from the White House and threatened to tell of some of the "seamy things" he had participated in, including the burglary of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office, forging Vietnam cables to smear the Kennedy administration, and spiriting ITT figure Dita Beard out of the country.