

Nixon Fund to Defend Haldeman Alleged

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President Nixon told his White House chief of staff **H. R. (Bob) Haldeman** that money from a secret fund would be available for Haldeman's legal defense in the Watergate case, according to accounts of secret testimony given to the Senate Watergate committee.

The President told Haldeman that the money was being kept by Charles G. "Bebe" Rebozo, the sources said, and included as much as \$400,000.

The information was supplied to the Senate committee last month by Lawrence M. Higby, who previously was one of Haldeman's chief assistants in the White House, the sources said.

According to the accounts of Higby's testimony, the President made the offer to Haldeman about April 30, 1973, the day Haldeman resigned from the White House staff.

The sources said Higby told Senate investigators that money from the fund was also going to be made available to former presidential aide John D. Ehrlichman, who also resigned from the White House staff April 30, 1973.

Haldeman and Ehrlichman are two of the six former presidential aides charged March 1 in the Watergate cover-up indictment.

The Washington Post has

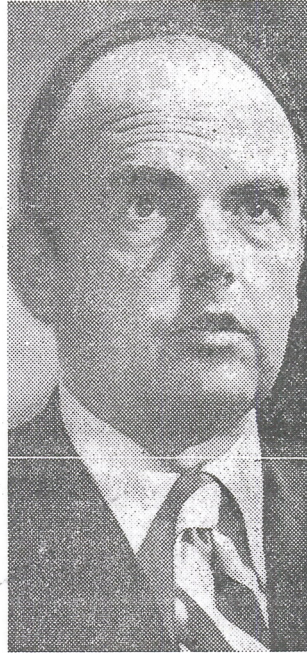


H. R. HALDEMAN
... told of secret funds

been unable to determine if any such fund as described by Higby ever existed or exists at this time.

However, two sources close to Ehrlichman have said recently that Ehrlichman has made it clear that his legal expenses—at least in part—will be paid by persons close to the White House.

In the words of one source, "there was no question (in conversations with Ehrlichman) that it was paid and that Nixon had ar-



JOHN D. EHRLICHMAN
... aid also available

ranged it or at least helped arrange it."

Asked about the allegations, Deputy White House Press Secretary Gerald Warren declined to confirm or deny them. He, however, issued the following statement:

"This pattern of contrived and selected leaks from the Senate Watergate secret testimony is becoming outrageous. Once again the testimony given in private has been selectively leaked in an obvious attempt to prejudice public opinion against

the President. Eventually members of the committee will see how the staff has misused the committee, violated due process and made a mockery of congressional investigative authority."

John J. Wilson, the attorney for Haldeman and until earlier this year the attorney for Ehrlichman, said that he was unaware of any such arrangement to pay the legal fees through a secret fund kept by Rebozo or anyone.

Wilson declined to make an inquiry to Haldeman about the matter as he has done in the past about other things. "We're not going to carry messages to Haldeman," Wilson said.

Asked about legal fees paid to him by Haldeman and Ehrlichman, Wilson said: "We've received no fees yet ... we're keeping time cards."

Wilson said that he would accept legal fees only from the personal funds of his clients or from a legitimately established trust fund.

Under normal circumstances, there is nothing illegal about the payment, by anyone of legal fees for criminal defendants.

However, the office of the special Watergate prosecutor has charged in the Watergate cover-up indictment that payments made in 1972 and 1973 to the seven original Watergate defendants were illegal because the money was allegedly

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Offer by Nixon of Secret Funds To Haldeman Defense Reported

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paid to buy the silence of the defendants.

The cover-up indictment against the President's six former aides, including Haldeman and Ehrlichman, charged that the purchase of silence constituted an obstruction of justice.

Some of those indicted in the Watergate cover-up, including Ehrlichman and former Attorney General John N. Mitchell, have maintained that the payments to the original Watergate defendants were intended as legal fees and family support—not payments for silence.

Higby's reported testimony provides the first indication that the Watergate cover-up defendants may be getting outside support from

those close to the President.

Reliable sources said that Higby told the committee he had informed Haldeman recently that he was going to testify about the offer to pay legal fees and that Haldeman reaffirmed to Higby that the President had made such an offer.

Higby could not be reached for comment. William S. Frates, the current attorney for Ehrlichman and Rebozo, also could not be reached for comment after repeated efforts.

According to sources close to Ehrlichman, Wilson was replaced after Ehrlichman concluded that he could not get full representation from an attorney who was also handling Haldeman's case.

In Wilson's place, Ehrlichman hired Frates, a Miami attorney who has been representing Rebozo in the Senate

committee's investigation of a \$100,000 cash contribution from billionaire Howard Hughes. Rebozo has testified he kept the \$100,000 for three years before returning it.

The Senate committee interviewed Higby, the sources said, as part of its investigation of White House involvement with the \$100,000 contribution from Hughes.

President Nixon's former personal attorney, Herbert W. Kalmbach, has testified that Rebozo told him that some of the \$100,000 was either lent or given to Rose Mary Woods, the President's personal secretary, F. Donald Nixon, one of the President's brothers, and others.

Rebozo has denied this, and the Senate committee is continuing its investigation in an attempt to resolve the conflict.