

Three Republicans Voice Concern For Hush Money Tapes

WASHINGTON (AP) — Three Republicans on the House Judiciary Committee say President Nixon's hush money conversation of March 21, 1973, is the only evidence they have heard that could tend to implicate the chief executive in the Watergate coverup.

But Vice President Gerald R. Ford said in a separate interview that what he earlier termed as Nixon's stonewall attitude toward the impeachment panel could in itself have an adverse effect on the committee's final judgment.

In Charlottesville, Va., former Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox said Nixon's refusal to comply with the committee's

evidence demands is one of three possible grounds for removing him from office.

Potentially even more serious, said Cox, would be Nixon's disobedience of a Supreme Court decree to turn over tapes and documents. Cox' successor, Leon Jaworski, is now seeking such an order from the high court.

Cox named as the third and broadest ground for impeachment the failure of Nixon to restrain his White House aides and campaigners who were involved in the scandal.

The three GOP committee members, interviewed over the Memorial Day recess, said the March 21 discussion between Nixon and then-counsel John W. Dean III is not definitive as to whether the President directly ordered a hush payment to a Watergate burglar.

But "In all honesty there is information on that tape that might tend to incriminate the President," said Rep. Charles E. Wiggins of California.

Wiggins and Reps. David W. Dennis of Indiana and Henry P. Smith of New York all had in-

sisted before listening to the tape last week that the inquiry had yet to hear any evidence implicating Nixon.

Now they say the March 21 talk, particularly Nixon's directive to Dean to "Get it" during the payment exchange, could be a turnaround point—provided it is clarified with further investigation.

In the course of that conversation, Nixon asked Dean if he thought they had no choice to meet Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt's demand for money.

Nixon: Would you agree that that's the prime thing that you damn well better get that done?

Dean: Obviously he ought to be given some signal anyway.

Nixon: (Expletive) Get it. In a way that—who is going to talk to him? Colson? He is the one who is supposed to know him.

Dean: Well, Colson doesn't have any money though ...

Some committee members say the full Nixon quote was "Jesus Christ, get it." Others thought the emphasis was "For Christ sakes, get it." Democrat Jerome Waldie, D-Calif., said it proved Nixon had committed an obstruction of justice.

If the President did mean money, said Dennis, his intent might have been to prevent Hunt from compromising national security secrets, not to keep him from implicating higher White House officials in the scandal.

Dennis has urged the panel to interrogate nine persons allegedly involved in getting the payment to Hunt as to whether they understood Nixon to have ordered the payment. Wiggins added that the tapes of follow-up conversations might also help provide clarification.

The panel is scheduled to resume its sessions Wednesday.