

# LaRue Tells Panel He Cannot Recall

*Witness Fails to Refute  
A Charge Against Nixon*

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*When He Discussed*

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## Payment to Hunt

WASHINGTON, July 8 — Frederick C. LaRue, summoned today before the House Judiciary Committee at the request of the White House, apparently did not refute an important element in the charge that President Nixon approved or tolerated the payment of alleged hush money to a convicted Watergate burglar.

Republican and Democratic members of the committee said tonight that Mr. LaRue, a former official of the President's 1972 re-election committee, could not recall with precision when on March 21, 1973, he discussed the payment of \$75,000 to E. Howard Hunt Jr.

The key conversation at issue was between Mr. LaRue and John W. Dean 3d, the ousted White House legal counsel.

James D. St. Clair, the President's chief defense counsel, told the committee last week that Mr. Dean had advised Mr. LaRue of demands by Mr. Hunt for money on the morning of March 21 — before, and not after, a meeting at which the President spoke of meeting the demands "to keep the cap on the bottle."

### Recollection Imprecise

But Mr. LaRue told reporters after more than four hours of questioning by committee lawyers and members and Mr. St. Clair that his recollection of the telephone conversation with Mr. Dean was imprecise.

"To the best of my recollection it was [in] the morning," Mr. LaRue said, "but it could have happened some other time."

Committee members also reported that Mr. LaRue was uncertain whether he had talked about the money demands in the morning or the afternoon of March 21—in the latter case, after Mr. Nixon was aware of the demands—with former Attorney General John N. Mitchell.

Mr. St. Clair reportedly had sought to demonstrate through the testimony of Mr. LaRue and four other individuals he urged

the committee to call as witnesses, that there was no direct connection between the President's March 21 discussion of the hush money demands with Mr. Dean and the payment of \$75,000 to Mr. Hunt later the same day.

### Neither Helped Nor Harmed

But Representative Robert McClory of Illinois, the second ranking Republican, said this evening that Mr. LaRue's testimony had neither helped nor harmed the President's defense.

"He was virtually unaffected," Mr. McClory said of the President. "On the basis of LaRue's testimony, different members will still have different interpretations."

The Judiciary Committee, resuming closed impeachment hearings after a four-day holiday recess, concentrated on the March 21 events in the examination of Mr. LaRue today.

Mr. LaRue's testimony was delayed until late today, however, so that Mr. St. Clair, the President's chief defense attorney, could join in oral argument of the Watergate tapes case before the United States Supreme Court.

Several members of the committee took advantage of the hiatus to sit as spectators in the audience this morning at the Supreme Court hearing.

"Just rubbernecking," said Representative William S. Cohen, Republican of Maine. He and the other members said that it was not possible, based on the hearing, to determine how the Court would rule on Mr. Nixon's refusal to comply with the special Watergate prosecutor's subpoena of tapes of 64 White House conversations.

The Court hearing, and the testimony later by Mr. LaRue, illustrated once more how central the tape recordings had become to the inquiry into the possible impeachment of the President.

Mr. Cohen said that if the Court should rule against Mr. Nixon and the President should fail to comply fully with the subpoena, the confrontation would "add impetus" to the impeachment movement.

The committee, which has been denied about 150 taped conversations by the President, will make public tomorrow its transcripts of eight of the 19 recordings Mr. Nixon yielded to the impeachment inquiry earlier this year.

### Staff Analysis Due

In addition, the committee will issue a staff analysis of what are described as a number of key discrepancies between the panel's transcripts and the edited versions published by the White House.

Among the conversations to be included in the committee transcripts is a long meeting on March 21 of last year at which the President discussed the hush money demands with Mr. Dean.

Mr. LaRue reportedly described to the committee today his role in the transfer of \$75,000 of surplus 1972 re-election campaign funds a few hours after the March 21 meeting.

Mr. LaRue told a Federal grand jury last Feb. 13 that he was informed early on the day of the payment, by Mr. Dean, that Mr. Hunt was demanding

\$60,000 in attorney fees and \$70,000 for living expenses. At the time, Mr. Hunt was awaiting sentencing for his part in the burglary of the Democratic party offices in the Watergate complex the previous June 17.

According to accounts of Mr. LaRue's grand jury testimony, he said that Mr. Dean had conveyed "a sense of urgency" about the money demands but had declined to authorize the payment, suggesting instead that Mr. LaRue

consult with the former attorney general.

The central issue in terms of the impeachment inquiry, appeared to be whether the President directed or knowingly acquiesced in the payment to Mr. Hunt.

A few Republicans on the committee, most notably Representative Charles W. Sandman Jr. of New Jersey, said that they were satisfied after hearing Mr. LaRue that the payment had been set in motion before Mr. Nixon knew of it.

But most Democrats and Republicans disagreed, saying that the issue was, at best, unsettled. Mr. Cohen told reporters that Mr. LaRue was "testifying as to his best recollection after two years" and that his testimony had to be "reconciled" with records indicating that the key conversations occurred after the President's meeting with Mr. Dean.

Mr. LaRue was said by committee members to have stated that he thought he had telephoned Mr. Mitchell just after talking with Mr. Dean. The Watergate grand jury alleged, in an indictment handed up last March 1, that Mr. Mitchell and Mr. LaRue had spoken by phone "on or about the early afternoon of March 21."

According to the grand jury, which named Mr. Nixon as an unindicted co-conspirator to the alleged Watergate cover-up, the conversation was one of a series of events flowing from the March 21 hush money discussion involving the President.

The indictment further alleged that the conversation between Mr. Mitchell and Mr. LaRue followed a discussion—also after the March 21 meeting—between Mr. Mitchell and H. R. Haldeman, the former White House chief of staff. Mr. Haldeman had been at part of the meeting in which the President and Mr. Dean discussed the money demands.