

Former St. Clair Aide Says Buzhardt Interferes With Case

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By Jack Nelson
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White House "obstructionists" are preventing James D. St. Clair, President Nixon's chief Watergate attorney, from releasing tapes and other evidence to the House Judiciary Committee, Cecil Emerson, who recently resigned from St. Clair's staff, said yesterday.

"St. Clair wants to turn over everything he feels is relevant and material to the impeachment inquiry, everything that is required by the Judiciary Committee," Emerson said in a telephone interview from Dallas where he is practicing law.

Emerson, who identified J. Fred Buzhardt, the President's counsel, as a principal obstructionist, said:

"St. Clair has tried to act in a professional manner, but they are obstructionists at the White House. They still engage in petty, selfish in-fighting even though the President is in the worst possible posture that he could be in since the whole Watergate matter started."

Apprised of Emerson's comments, St. Clair exclaimed, "He said all that? Boy, from his posture, I wouldn't know how he knew. The President decides what's released and not anyone else."

Emerson was already a member of the Watergate legal team when St. Clair joined it on Jan. 4. "I have a high personal regard for him," St. Clair said of Emerson, "but I don't believe he correctly states the

facts that I believe to exist." taped.

Emerson, 39, a former Justice Department attorney who left the President's legal staff two weeks ago after four months service, also said that Mr. Nixon has kept St. Clair in the dark as to the contents of the tapes.

St. Clair refused to discuss whether he had listened to the tapes or whether he knew how many of the conversations in question had actually been

Emerson said he was "triggered" into commenting publicly about the matter because of "the White House's refusal to go ahead and turn over the tapes the committee requested."

"I can see I'll probably get blasted by the White House for this," he said, "but I hope they don't stoop to that level. I'm not a Judas on this thing, but it bothers me that the people at the White House won't get behind Jim St. Clair and let him resolve this matter."

The Judiciary Committee Thursday subpoenaed tapes and other records of the 42 conversations, which it says deal with the Watergate cover-up phase of its inquiry.

"I know Mr. St. Clair and his professional qualifications," Emerson said. "He knows he has put his professional reputation on the line."

"He has publicly defended the President and proclaimed his innocence and has visited congressmen and senators on the matter."

St. Clair said, "I don't know

that I've publicly made statements regarding the President's innocence. I've tried to avoid making public statements.

"For a lawyer to pass judgment on any case is inappropriate. On the other hand I'm satisfied that the President is not guilty of the matter about which I believe he is being charged."

Asked if he were referring to the Watergate cover-up, St. Clair said:

"Yes, that's the principal matter, although a large number of charges have been mentioned by the Judiciary Committee. I can't deal with those until I see what the Committee does with them."

St. Clair said that Buzhardt "works with me very closely on these matters. He has had an extensive background working in this area. But the President has custody of the tapes."