

Dean's disclosures brought

WASHINGTON (AP) — A deeply worried Richard M. Nixon was told in April 1973 that John W. Dean's disclosures might lead to his impeachment "on the ground that you committed a crime."

Nixon reacted by working out a story to protect himself.

"I have got to put the wagons up around the President," Nixon was heard telling top aide H.R. Haldeman on a tape recording of April 25, 1973, played Thursday for the Watergate cover-up trial jury.

Ironically, what seemed to concern Nixon most was that Dean might have taped a conversation a month earlier, on March 21, when they discussed the blackmail money demands being made on the White House by convicted Watergate burglar E. Howard Hunt Jr.

"I just wonder if the son-of-a-bitch had a recorder on him," Nixon said. "I didn't notice any, but I wasn't looking."

The playing of four recordings, none made public previously, ended the government's use of tapes as its chief witness against Haldeman, John D. Ehrlichman, John N. Mitchell, Robert C.

Mardian and Kenneth W. Parkinson—all charged with conspiring to cover up White House involvement in the Watergate affair.

Nixon is an unindicted co-conspirator in the case but President Ford's pardon makes him immune from criminal penalty.

Dean, who had been the President's counsel throughout the Watergate turmoil, had gone to prosecutors early in April to spill the whole story.

Part of that story was that Nixon had said in the March 21 conversation that there would be no problem in raising a million dollars to keep the Watergate defendants quiet.

In the first of three April 25 conversations played for the jury Ehrlichman told Nixon, "I think it's entirely conceivable that if Dean is totally out of control and if matters are not handled adroitly that you could get a resolution of impeachment in the Senate."

Nixon said: "That's right."

Ehrlichman continued: "On the ground that you committed a crime and that there is no other legal process

available to the United States people other than impeachment. Otherwise, you have immunity from prosecution."

"Right," said Nixon.

Ehrlichman said, "You get down to a point where you've got John Dean prancing in there and saying the President said this and the President said that ... I think the only way that I know to make a judgment on this is for you to listen to your tapes and see what actually was said then, or maybe for Bob (Haldeman) to do it or somebody. See what was said in there and then analyze how big a threat it is."

Ehrlichman has said all along that he did not know about the clandestine White House system that recorded everything said in Nixon's presence in his offices.

He has said he learned about it at the same time that Alexander Butterfield revealed the system's existence at the Senate Watergate hearings on July 16, 1973.

But Ehrlichman's lawyer said Thursday that his client had been told Nixon had taped some of the conversations with Dean only, including March 21.

impeachment worry

Nixon sent Haldeman to listen to that tape, and the recording of Haldeman's report back to Nixon was played for the jury.

"Well, I say though that ... we can get the money," Nixon said.

"Okay, but you didn't do it," Haldeman replied. "You're drawing

Dean out on what he's talking about here."

Nixon: "You have to know exactly what he has."