

Two Angry Factions Clash in White House

Haldeman-Ehrlichman Team Reported Battling Mitchell-Dean Circle

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WASHINGTON, April 22—Experts on the White House now discern, in the new outburst of recriminations on the Watergate affair, a clear pattern of factional strife that threatens the top command of the executive branch.

"The Haldeman-Ehrlichman side of the White House is in open warfare with the Mitchell-Dean side," said a senior adviser to President Nixon over the weekend. "It is a brutal battle."

Some of the angry principals openly admit a spirit of "every man for himself." Yet observers also see a rallying of allies along two main lines of power and loyalty within Mr. Nixon's top staff.

One part of the executive structure, as Presidential confidants now describe it, was recruited, led and protected by former Attorney General John N. Mitchell. The other side looked to the White House chief of staff, H. R. Haldeman, as its captain, and to John D. Ehrlichman, a Presidential counselor, as his deputy.

After more than five years of cordial rivalry, the two groups are in a struggle that some White House insiders say could bring down both factions.

A scorecard line-up of the two Nixon groups, as compiled by ranking officials and

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former officials, sheds considerable light on last week's charges and countercharges.

Last week, a Haldeman man, Jeb Stuart Magruder, told Federal Prosecutors that Mr. Mitchell and John W. Dean 3d, a young Mitchell protégé, had been in on the original planning to bug the Democratic National Committee offices in the Watergate complex during the Presidential campaign last year.

The 38-year-old Mr. Magruder—a Californian and a

marketing man, like many in the Haldeman faction—first served the Nixon Administration as deputy to Herbert G. Klein, the director of communications for the executive branch and an old friend of the President's.

Magruder Moved In

During the summer of 1971, after Mr. Mitchell appointed one of his own young lieutenants, Harry S. Flemming, to organize a Nixon re-election committee, Mr. Haldeman countered by sending Mr. Magruder into help run the early operation. By the spring of 1972, Mr. Magruder was understood to have cut off most of Mr. Flemming's influence.

Immediately after news leaked out that Mr. Magruder was implicating Mr. Mitchell and Mr. Dean in the Watergate plot, Mr. Dean's friends put out the story that Mr. Haldeman had helped to conceal the truth about the bugging by intercepting and distorting the results of the investigation that Mr. Dean, as White House counsel, conducted for the President.

Mr. Dean, now 34, had been called "Mitchell's fair-haired boy" since 1969 when he was the Attorney General's trouble-shooter in the Justice Department.

One Presidential aide recalls the dramatic scene that marked Mr. Dean's appointment to the White House: President Nixon was on the verge of announcing that Leonard Garment, his former law partner and still a member of the White House staff, would become the chief counsel. At the last minute, the aide says Mr. Mitchell came into the President's office to insist on the choice of Mr. Dean.

In Touch With Mitchell

In managing White House legal business, Mr. Dean stayed in close touch with Mr. Mitchell and the Justice Department.

Mr. Dean warned last week that he would not be made a "scapegoat" in the Watergate scandal. He drafted a statement himself and had his secretary phone it to news offices after Ronald L. Ziegler, the White House

press secretary, reportedly refused to put it out through the normal channels. Mr. Ziegler, who once worked for Mr. Haldeman at the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency, has always been considered a part of the Haldeman White House machinery.

Mr. Mitchell confirmed last week, in response to Mr. Magruder's charge, that he had participated in discussions about bugging the Democrats, though he insisted he had repeatedly vetoed plans suggested by Mr. Magruder and G. Gordon Liddy, one of seven convicted conspirators.

At a news conference Friday, in what some sources interpreted as a thrust at Mr. Haldeman, Mr. Mitchell added: "I would like to know who it was that kept bringing them back and back and back."

William G. Hundley, Mr. Mitchell's lawyer in the case, said over the weekend that Mr. Mitchell had not meant to implicate Mr. Haldeman. But other Mitchell associates rejected that disclaimer.

'The Only Person'

"Who else but Haldeman was in a position to challenge Mitchell on something like that?" A Mitchell confidant asked. "Haldeman is the only person he could be pointing at."

In the Nixon administration's happier days, the Mitchell and Haldeman groups shared responsibility and credit for the President's domestic success. But members of both groups now say that there were always latent tensions between them and a clear sense of their different identities.

The "hard-core Mitchell group," according to one of its members, was assembled on the organizational side of the 1968 campaign, which Mr. Mitchell managed, and much of its strength was later concentrated in the Justice Department.

Robert S. Mardian, for example, now working with his family construction company in Phoenix, Ariz., was Mr. Mitchell's campaign lieutenant in the Western states in 1968, and later served as counsel to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and as Assistant Attorney General in the Interior. Mardian has denied all suggestions that he was involved in planning or covering up the Watergate raid.

Worked with Magruder

Frederick C. Larue, another member of the Mitchell group, is a wealthy Mississippian who helped run the 1968 campaign in the South

and handled special assignments for the White House later. Mr. Larue, who worked closely with Mr. Magruder in last year's campaign, has repeatedly been mentioned in news accounts as a conduit of Republican funds to the Watergate defendants. He has recently been unavailable for comment.

Harry S. Flemming, 32, is a Virginian, the son of Arthur S. Flemming, who was Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare in the Eisenhower Administration. He describes himself as a "Mitchell man" in the first phase of the Nixon re-election campaign, but concedes he was jostled out of power even before it got started.

The Mitchell men, according to one of them, considered themselves the organizers and the grass-roots politicians in the Administration. The Haldeman group "tended to be advance men and image guys," he said. "You never heard the Mitchell group talk media, but that talk dominated the other

crowd. I always had the impression that their group tolerated the political side but had no feel for politics."

The "hard-core Haldeman group" came from the world of advertising and, directly or indirectly, from California.

Mr. Magruder, who had a background in merchandising cosmetics and women's hosiery, was considered the Haldeman crowd's most versatile administrator.