

APR 29 1973

THIS WORLD

April 29, 1973

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Edited by the
San Francisco Chronicle
A Section of the S. F. Sunday Examiner & Chronicle

Flood of Watergate Reports

BLOOD-RED tulips against the spring-green lawns. Bright azaleas. Dogwood. The soft, sweetly scented spring air: A time of magical beauty in Washington, D.C., and of tourists.

Mrs. Melvin Levinthal from Indiana sat on the Capitol's great sweep of white steps last week and drank in the scene. "I could cry," she said. "This place is so breathtakingly beautiful and so damned ugly — I could just cry."

The ugliness that dampened her spirits — and those of many another American — was Watergate, the scandal that, like a stain on a white tablecloth, spread the more it was scrubbed and would not go away. Not since the Teapot Dome scandal of the Twenties had Washington been so shaken.

Legion of Names

By last week the number of persons in and around the White House whose names had been linked — rightly or wrongly — with the bug-

On This World's cover are pictures of the Watergate complex in Washington and of John Mitchell (center) after testifying before the grand jury.

ging-break-in of Democratic National Headquarters in the Watergate office complex last June 17, had become legion.

President Nixon, after publicly declaring he was conducting his own search for truth, had held a Cabinet meeting a week ago Friday and among other things apparently asked Attorney General Richard Kleindienst to disqualify himself in the Watergate case because, as Kleindienst later told the press, it involved people with whom "I have had personal and professional relationships."

Mr. Nixon then had gone off to Key Biscayne, Fla., for Easter with only his immediate family and Press Secretary Ronald Ziegler, a most unusual circumstance as both H. R. Haldeman, President Nixon's chief-of-staff, and his top domestic adviser John Ehrlichman, were missing. This had never happened before

Who'd Be Caught?

Meanwhile, back in Washington, work at the White House was reported virtually at a standstill. The hostilities of long-restrained factions began to pop into the open. Who would be caught in the inevitable "spring housecleaning"?

Those under the most im-

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mediate suspicion hired lawyers, including Haldeman and Ehrlichman. White House rivals observed: "They have lost their credibility . . . the German Wall is cracked. . ."

John Dean III, President Nixon's counsel, also was one of these. He and former Attorney General John Mitchell had been fingered by both James McCord, already convicted of Watergate bugging, and Jeb Stuart Magruder, second in command of the Committee to Re-elect the President, as two of the officials who had approved the Watergate bugging and later approved payments out of campaign funds to the seven convicted Watergate conspirators, allegedly to keep them quiet.

Dean's Statement

In the White House, Dean did an unprecedented thing — he released a statement which his secretary, her voice trembling, read to newspapers over the phone, without clearing it with the White House brass.

The statement declared Dean was certain the Federal Grand Jury and Senator Sam Ervin's (Dem.-N.C.) Select Committee would "justly handle" the case. Everyone should refrain from placing guilt on anyone until everyone had been heard under oath.

"Finally, some may hope or think that I will become a

scapegoat in the Watergate case. Anyone who believes this does not know me, know the true facts, nor understand our system of justice," said Dean.

He would name people "above and below me" if necessary, a friend of Dean's later told the press.

While Ziegler had been pointedly miffed at the Dean statement, after Mr. Nixon reached Florida, the President made public the fact he telephoned Dean, to say, "You're still my counsel."

Mitchell's Problem

Mitchell, who had resigned as Attorney General to head the Committee to Re-elect the President (which was originally presumed to be the fountainhead of Watergate), hired a lawyer before appearing before the Grand Jury a week ago.

The lawyer was William Hundley, a Brooklyn Irishman and top trial lawyer who had originated the Justice Department's division to fight organized crime. It was he who hired Henry Petersen, now head of that division, as his deputy. Hundley and Petersen were still weekend golf partners and both had worked with and for Mitchell at various times. Petersen, now in charge of the Watergate investigation and prosecution, had already said he was not sure Magruder was telling the truth.

Mitchell's problem ran deeper than Magruder. He had consistently denied any prior knowledge of Watergate.



AP Wirephoto

LIDDY

As recently as a month ago he had issued a statement through De Van Shumway, public affairs officer for the Committee to Re-elect the President, denying testimony by James W. McCord Jr., one of the convicted Watergate Seven.

Prior Knowledge?

McCord had said Mitchell had prior knowledge of the affair and that another Watergate Seven leader, G. Gordon Liddy, had told him of meetings with Mitchell and Dean.

While no transcript of Mitchell's testimony was

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just politics'**

made public. "leaks" from Hundley and "associates of Mitchell" said he told the jury: He had met with Dean, Liddy and Magruder January 24 and Feb. 4, 1972 and once later (after he resigned March 1, 1972 as Attorney General and became head of the re-election campaign) in Key Biscayne, where big



AP Wirephoto

MAGRUDER

charts of the plan were shown.

Mitchell was quoted as saying plans were discussed by Dean, Liddy and Magruder for bugging the Democratic opposition, but each time he rejected the plans. He had "never approved any bugging plans during any period during the campaign," Mitchell told reporters after three hours of testimony.

Mitchell contended before the Grand Jury he did nothing illegal in approving payments to Watergate Seven defendants after their arrest. It was common corporate practice, he said, as they were employees of the Re-election Committee and entitled to legal defense fees.

McCord's Testimony

Most loquacious witness last week was James McCord, who also was the first to hint the President might have authorized efforts to cover up the scandal.

Transcripts of McCord's testimony leaked to columnist Jack Anderson (an angry Judge John Sirica promptly ordered an investigation of that leak while Anderson contended it was his constitutional right to have the in-

formation but agreed to print no more testimony from transcripts.)

In it he contended the late Mrs. Dorothy Hunt, wife of one of the convicted Watergate Seven, was used as the "payoff" person. She died in a Chicago plane crash and \$10,000 in \$100 bills was found in a bag she was carrying.

McCord said he was told by Mrs. Hunt they wanted the defendants to go to jail and keep silent, that Hunt and Liddy were getting \$3000 a month from the re-election committee in salary and would continue to do so.

Meanwhile, a new Gallup poll indicated that 41 per cent of Americans believed President Nixon had known about Watergate in advance, 32 per cent thought he hadn't, 27 per cent had no opinion; 53 per cent thought the affair was "just politics."

Fischetti Looks at Watergate

Fischetti

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