



UPI Telephoto

Robert Odle pointed to an organizational chart of the Committee for the Re-Election of the President

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Campaign Aide Robert Odle

He Was Polite for 4 Hours

Washington

After months of escalating shock waves about the Watergate scandal, the lead-off witness at Senate hearings was not one of the ballyhooed big names but a softspoken foot soldier for Richard Nixon named Robert C. Odle Jr.

Odle, a boyish-looking 29, calmly and patiently answered a barrage of Senators' questions for more than four hours, punctuating his replies with "Sir" and "I'm sorry, but I really don't know."

Odle was director of administration — a sort of office manager — for the Committee for the Re-Election of the President, the outfit that financed the spy squad that burglarized and bugged Democratic party headquarters at the Watergate last June.

Vowing earnestly he knew "absolutely" nothing about the spy plot, Odle detailed the organizational and staff structure of the campaign. Along the way, he had intriguing testimony about heavy White House influence and sensitive secret files he said he never read but that his superiors were worried about.

A product of Wayne State University in Detroit and the

Detroit College of Law, Odle looks like many of the bright young men corralled by the Nixon organization: conservatively dressed, hair fashionable but neatly styled, bespectacled.

His meteoric career into big-time politics began fresh out of law school in January, 1969, when he joined the staff of Mr. Nixon's director of communications, Herbert Klein, whom he had met while working on Nixon's 1968 presidential campaign.

From there, he was graduated to CRP in the first wave of White House staffers sent across Pennsylvania avenue to open a presidential campaign office near the executive mansion in May, 1971.

He was there until May 1 of this year, when he landed what was described as a "temporary" job as a \$26,898-a-year consultant at the Agriculture Department. It was more temporary than he thought.

Agriculture Secretary Earl L. Butz fired him less than a week later when he found out the ex-CRP aide was on the payroll and possibly would be drawn into the Watergate scandal.

Back Odle went to CRP — which is still operating — as a "salaried consultant."

Born in Port Huron, Mich., and educated in its

public schools, Odle was active in Republican affairs throughout his college career. Regarded as "strongly conservative," he was president of the College Republicans at Wayne State, active in the Young Americans for Freedom and once served as secretary for the Midwest Federation of College Republicans.

He was the man who hired — at the recommendation of the White House — James W. McCord Jr. to be security director for the Nixon campaign. He testified he was shocked when he learned that McCord, whom he liked and respected, had

been arrested at the Watergate.

He had so little idea what McCord was into, he testified recently in a civil deposition, that his first reaction to hearing of the break-in at Democratic headquarters — before he knew McCord was involved — was one of relief.

He told associates, he said: "That would never happen here because I have this fellow working for me named Jim McCord and he has this place so tight that that could never happen here. Thank God, we have got McCord."

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