

Dean at Witness Table: A Calm and Cool 'David'

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WASHINGTON, June 26— Considering that he sees himself as David going up against Goliath without a slingshot, John W. Dean 3d seems about as cool and collected as a man could be.

He started out early today telling the Senate Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities that "It's an almost impossible task" for a little guy to take on the President of the United States in a credibility match on the Watergate affair.

"And it is not a very pleasant situation," Mr. Dean added as he sat for the second day at the witness table in the red-carpeted caucus room of the Old Senate Office Building.

But then he went right ahead and did it, picking up in response to questions where he had left off after spending more than six hours yesterday reading a 245-page opening statement.

Firm Answers

As the committee members and their counsel began sorting through his testimony, Mr. Dean, somber but apparently at ease, with his brow occasionally furrowing above his horn-rimmed glasses, answered firmly and with little hesitation.

His voice was a little deeper, a touch rougher today, a souvenir of his tour de force before the committee and the network television cameras yesterday.

But as he sat alone at the witness table again (an acknowledged tactic to dramatize the role he was carved out as one man against the vast resources of the Nixon Administration), he was as unflustered and computer-like under questioning as he was while during his reading stint.

When Samuel Dash, the majority counsel to the committee, asked about Mr. Dean's "impressive title" as counsel to the President and his "big office," the witness responded with only a hint of humor that he had learned before he went to the White House "that the title was probably the best part of the job."

Dotting the 'T's

Most of the work of the counsel's office, he said, was "really related to technical legal problems, making sure that the i's were dotted and the t's were crossed." At other times, he described himself as a "messenger" and a "firefighter."

Despite his disclaimers to any real importance in the White House way of things, it was not hard for anyone watching and listening to the methodical, 34-year-old Ohioan to imagine his value as an expeditor, a "can-do" man a boss could depend on.

Somehow, Mr. Dean is not quite like the other bright young Nixon men who have appeared before the committee since its hearings started May 17.

The blue suit was there today, with the blue shirt and the paisley tie. His light brown hair is fashionably, if

if carefully, cropped. He is slender, assured. His blonde wife, Maureen, well-coiffed and meticulously dressed, sits bravely behind him.

But something is missing. He is not like Jeb Stuart Magruder, former deputy director of the Committee for the Re-election of the President, or Herbert L. Porter, its scheduling director, or Hugh W. Sloan Jr., treasurer of the Finance Committee to Re-elect the President.

The contrite, boyish smile, turned frequently on an interrogator—that what's missing. That, and the repeated assurances that they knew they did wrong, that they were members of the team who got caught up in the game—the sense that, caught with their hand in the cookie jar, they were willing to take their punishment and hoped the spanking wouldn't be too hard.

Not John Dean. He faces the committee down with deadly earnestness. He is not, not hostile. But he's obviously there to do another job—this time for himself. He prepared the 245-page statement, and he showered the committee with scores of supporting documents.

He wants to be believed. By his own account, he's sorry that the President did not listen to him and lay bare the skeletons in the Watergate case. He hopes the President is "forgiven" for his "involvement" in the cover-up.

Doing a Job

Mr. Dean lists his own sins, one by one. But he does not smile—contritely or otherwise. He does not really apologize. He was doing a job. Some mistakes were made. Some people were going to get caught. The President might suffer, but Mr. Dean does not want to be a "scapegoat."

Even when Mr. Dash questioned Mr. Dean about the \$4,380 that he has acknowledged having "borrowed" from \$15,200 in campaign funds that were left in his safe to pay for his wedding and honeymoon last October and for other personal expenses, he did not change his tone or his precise response.

Asked if he had ever repaid the money, Mr. Dean replied:

"I did not repay it until I opened a trustee account, when a subsequent check was negotiated to make the funds whole at that time. That was in April of this year."

At no time did he suggest that it might have been unwise.

Wrongdoing Conceded

Before reading his day-long opening statement yesterday, Mr. Dean conceded that he had been "involved in obstructing justice," that he had "assisted another in perjured testimony" and that he had "made personal use of funds that were in my custody."

He said then that it was "far easier to talk about these things myself than to talk about what others did."

But he did not say he was sorry.