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Nixon Says He Reject

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President Nixon insisted last night that he never authorized a promise of clemency for any of the Watergate defendants and never authorized the payment of money to any of the defendants.

However, he acknowledged that the tape of his March 21, 1973, conversation with former aides John W. Dean III and H. R. (Bob) Haldeman might lead to different interpretations.

"But I knew what I meant and I know also what I did," the President declared at a news conference last

night, his second in 10 days. "I meant that the whole transaction was wrong."

Whatever appears in the transcript of the tape has to be taken in light of his subsequent actions, Mr. Nixon maintained. He was attempting to rebut the implications, contained in last week's grand jury indictment of Haldeman, that he had not opposed paying hush money.

The grand jury indicted Haldeman on a charge of falsely declaring that Mr. Nixon told Dean the payment of hush money to the defendants would be wrong. The grand jury had access to the tape of the March 21 conversation which Mr. Nixon referred to last

night and which he said might be subject to different interpretations, as he has said in the past.

In his Aug. 22 press conference, the President said that Haldeman's report to the Senate Watergate committee was accurate.

Last night, the President appeared to be saying that his statement that "it would be wrong" might be interpreted by some as referring to the granting of clemency but that he meant it also to apply to the payment of hush money. The same implication appears, though less clearly, in his Aug. 22 news conference.

It was on March 21, the President

ed Hush-Money Plan

said, that Dean first told him money raised for the defendants was to buy their silence.

He said he questioned Dean at "great length" on the matter, discussing various options. "Then we came to what I considered to be the bottom line," Mr. Nixon said. "I pointed out that raising the money, paying the money, was something that could be done, but I pointed out that that was linked to clemency, that no individual is simply going to stay in jail because people are taking care of his family or his counsel, as the case might be, and that unless a promise of clemency was made, that the objective of the so-

called hush money would not be achieved.

"... I then said that to pay clemency was wrong. In fact, I think I can quote it directly: I said, 'It is wrong; that is for sure'... I meant the whole transaction was wrong."

Mr. Nixon offered for the first time to reply to written questions from the House Judiciary Committee, which is considering impeachment charges against him.

He also said that he would consider meeting with the chairman and vice chairman of the committee and replying to questions under oath.

But he said he would not submit to

cross-examination in a way that would, in effect, "put the President in the box when he was not indicted, in effect, by the House of Representatives."

The President would be "in the box" before the Senate if the House voted a bill of impeachment, he commented.

When asked if he would grant clemency in the future to those indicted and convicted in connection with Watergate cases, Mr. Nixon refused to rule out the possibility in certain circumstances relating "to a personal tragedy or something of that sort."

Nevertheless, he asserted that "under no circumstances has any de-

See **PRESIDENT**, A19, Col. 1

PRESIDENT, From A1

defendant or potential defendant been offered clemency, and none will be offered clemency. That would be improper, and I will not engage in that activity."

The President called on all Americans to remember that his former aides indicted last week should be presumed innocent until proven guilty in court.

He charged that they already have been convicted "over and over again" in the press and in committees.

But they have not "used the shield of the Fifth Amendment as they could have" nor have they bargained for pleas "as they could have in order to

Despite the President's defense, complex questions remained.

For example, in answer to a question, the President said that it would be improper for him to release a text of the March 21 tape because it might prejudice the rights of those named in last Friday's indictment.

When the President took a similar position last year, U.S. District Court Judge John J. Sirica said the release of the text would be permissible and invited Mr. Nixon to do so.

"If the President thinks it advisable to waive any privilege and make tapes or other material public, he of course is free to do so at any time," Judge Sirica said on Nov. 14.

The judge's comments followed sev-

eral White House statements asserting that the court's orders prevented the President from releasing the tapes or their texts.

As he did in his State of the Union address, Mr. Nixon asserted that he had turned over all evidence sought by Jaworski and that the special prosecutor had been satisfied that the evidence submitted was sufficient to complete his investigation.

However, Jaworski said in a letter to the Senate Judiciary Committee last month that the President had refused to submit some of the evidence necessary for satisfactory completion of the inquiry.

The House Judiciary Committee has

get lighter sentences," Mr. Nixon said. "Each of them has testified freely before the committee, each of them has testified before the grand jury, each apparently believes in his innocence," the President said by way of defense of his former assistants now facing lengthy court trials.

When a reporter asked if Mr. Nixon would pay his own defense costs, he said that if he is impeached and if the Attorney General so rules he will attempt to raise money to pay his own defense before the Senate.

The President made it clear he does not intend to turn over more evidence to the Judiciary Committee than he already has turned over to Watergate Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski.

He also said that he would consider

To do so, he said, would not lead to a speedy conclusion of the investigation but to a "fishing expedition."

"To cart everything that is in the White House down to a committee, and to have them paw through it on a fishing expedition," would add months to the investigation, he maintained.

At another point, the President said that "at all times it had been my goal to have a complete disclosure of this whole situation, because as you know, I have said there can be no cloud over the White House.

"I want that cloud removed. That is one of the reasons we have cooperated as we have with the special prosecutor. We will also cooperate with the Rodino committee. The facts will come out."

sought some of the same evidence that Mr. Nixon refused to supply to Jaworski, and last night the President indicated he does not wish to supply it to the House impeachment inquiry either.

The material, including the tape recordings of 25 specified presidential meetings and telephone conversations, "is material to a particular facet of our investigation," Jaworski said in his letter, released Feb. 14.

"Although it is true that the grand jury will be able to return indictments without the benefit of this material," Jaworski added, "the material is important to a complete and thorough investigation and may contain evidence necessary for any future trials."