

MAR 7 1974 NY Times

NIXON INSISTS HE DIDN'T AUTHORIZE HUSH MONEY IN WATERGATE CASES; OFFERS TESTIMONY TO RODINO UNIT

DEAN TALK IS CITED

President, at a News Parley, Predicts No Recession in '74

By JOHN HERBERS
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON March 6 — President Nixon insisted tonight that he did not authorize the payment of hush money or the granting of clemency for Watergate defendants at a White House meeting March 21. Mr. Nixon acknowledged, however, at his second televised news conference in eight

Transcript of news conference will be found on Page 32.

days, that the tape recording of the discussion might be subject to different interpretation.

But he added:

"What I say is that I know what I meant, I know what I did, and I think that any fair-minded person will reach the same conclusion that I have repeated here several times tonight."

Cites Down Words

He said that his own words at the March 21 meeting, and presumably still on the tape, were, "It is wrong, that's for sure."

Mr. Nixon discussed the March 21 meeting with two former White House aides, John W. Dean 3d and H. R. Haldeman, in a televised news conference from the East Room of the White House.

At points in his explanation of what took place in that meeting, his lips trembled and throughout most of the 35-minute conference he appeared nervous.

In answer to questions on matters not involving the Watergate scandal, the President made the following points:

¶He predicted that there would be no recession this year

and that, with food and fuel prices in check by the middle of the year, the economy would begin to take "an upward turn."

¶He disputed the contention that Republican defeats in recent mid-term Congressional elections indicated that Republicans would suffer badly in the regular 1976 elections.

¶He said that he thought American efforts would lead to a lifting of the Arab oil embargo but he declined to make a flat prediction for fear that it might lead the Arabs to do otherwise.

¶He disclosed that he would submit legislation to Congress asking for limits on private campaign contributions.

Grand Jury Focus

The March 21 meeting is crucial to the ongoing Watergate investigation because the grand jury that returned indictments against seven former Nixon aides last Friday focused on it. The grand jury brought a perjury charge against Mr. Haldeman and raised the implication that Mr. Nixon may have approved the payment of hush money.

In the indictment, the grand jury quoted Mr. Haldeman, the former White House chief of staff, as telling the Senate Watergate committee that Mr. Nixon had said "it would be wrong" to raise \$1-million to insure the silence of the Watergate burglars. The indictment charged that Mr. Haldeman had knowingly lied in asserting that President Nixon had said "it would be wrong" to raise hush money.

Tonight, Mr. Nixon repeated

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the explanation of the meeting that he made last August in a news conference. If money were raised for the defendants, he said, they would then want executive clemency and that could not be done.

"I then said that to pay clemency was wrong," he said tonight. "In fact, I think I can quote it directly. I said it is wrong, that's for sure. Mr. Mr. Haldeman was present when I said that. Mr. Dean was present. Both agreed with my

conclusion.

'I Know What I Did'

"Now when individuals read the entire transcript of the 21st meeting or hear the entire tape where we discussed all these options, they may reach different interpretations. But I know what I meant, and I know, also, what I did."

He then said he meant the whole transaction was wrong. Referring to inflation, Mr. Nixon said it was caused by the major factors—increased energy costs and rising food prices.

By the middle of this year, he said, energy prices will "be kept in check and, we trust, even moving downward." A record food crop should also "bring the price upsurge in food under control," he added.

He reiterated that he thought there would be no recession this year and that the economy would take "an upward turn" by the end of 1974.

Mr. Nixon said that his proposals for campaign reform would set a \$50 limit on cash contributions to candidates for President and a \$3,000 limit on all contributions to candidates for Congress and \$15,000 to Presidential candidates.

He declined to endorse public financing on the ground that the proposals before Congress would mean that a citizen would be taxed to support a candidate or party that he opposed.

Asked whether he would pay for his own lawyers in impeachment

proceedings rather than paying for them with public money, Mr. Nixon said that he would do so if the Attorney General ruled that it was necessary.

"If the Attorney General ruled that the President should pay for his own defense, I'll find someone to loan me the money," he said with a smile.

The President said that the use of a grant of immunity for any "major" White House employe would be "highly improper," despite the practice of prosecutors using such grants to obtain evidence against other potential criminal defendants.

He said none of his former key aides had pleaded a Fifth Amendment right to refuse to answer questions or had bargained with prosecutors for leniency in exchange for testimony. He asserted that his former associates had been convicted only in the news

media

The former aides are apparently convinced of their innocence and a court of law will ultimately decide the facts, Mr. Nixon said.

Mr. Nixon was asked why he did not turn over all information to the authorities after his March 21 meeting with Mr. Dean. He said that the "option of a full disclosure at that time" had been considered but that he had a problem because he had not been informed about payments to defendants and the "alleged cover-up" until that date and that he thought it was incumbent on him to conduct his own investigation first.

It was always his goal, however, to have a full disclosure of all the facts, Mr. Nixon insisted.

He said in response to a question that he had considered publicly disclosing the contents of a recording of a key March 21, 1973, Watergate discussion, but that it was currently part of the criminal investigation.

Eventually the tape contents will become public, he said, and

any "objective" observer will conclude that it shows the President had no prior knowledge of the Watergate cover-up, never authorized executive clemency for Watergate defendants and never approved payment of money to silence the Watergate burglars.

He said he had no information to whom payments of hush money had been made to E. Howard Hunt Jr., one of the original Watergate defendants.

One such payment, for \$75,000, was made on March 21, 1973, the same day that the President said he disapproved of such a practice. But he said he had known nothing of that and that his information was restricted to knowledge of his own actions.

The President was asked about a statement of the chairmen of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees that they would like to cut the defense budget by \$3-billion. He said that he had met with the chairmen and that there had been no discussion of reducing the defense budget.



President Nixon speaking during his news conference at the White House last night

United Press International