

McCord Submits Petition to House To Impeach Nixon

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James W. McCord Jr., the convicted Watergate conspirator, yesterday formally petitioned the House to impeach President Nixon for not reporting a year ago that he had been told hush money was paid to keep Watergate defendants quiet.

In a six-page document with appendices mailed to the House Judiciary Committee, McCord accused the President of violating three federal statutes and four provisions of the Constitution and of committing the impeachable offenses of criminal nonfeasance and malfeasance in office.

In addition, McCord charged, the President "may have . . . engaged in a criminal conspiracy against the United States . . . may have engaged in the conspiracy as the principal . . . [and] engaged in a further conspiracy to impede and hinder those holding office . . . from the proper discharge of their duties."

Central to all of McCord's charges is the President's Wednesday night press conference statement that on March 21, 1973, then White House counsel John W. Dean III "told me that payments had been made to defendants for the purpose of keeping them quiet, not simply for their defense."

The statement was a direct contradiction of Mr. Nixon's statement on Aug. 15, 1973, over television that "I was only told that the money had been used for attorneys' fees and family support, not that it had been paid to procure silence from the recipients."

The information regarding

hush-money payments, McCord charged, was evidence of "the federal crime of tampering with the seven Watergate defendants" and of bribery, and should have been reported at once to the trial judge, John J. Sirica. Two days after the Nixon-Dean meeting, McCord noted, the seven Watergate defendants were up for sentencing before Sirica. Disclosure of the payments would have forced him to overturn the convictions, he said.

According to the Associated Press, White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler said in Key Biscayne, Fla., that there were "semantic differences" between Mr. Nixon's remarks Wednesday night and on Aug. 15 involving "ambiguities of the Nixon-Dean conversation.

"It's difficult to sort out, so we're not going to say anything further at this time," the AP reported Ziegler as saying. "We will address it at some time in the future."

McCord's petition to the House specifically accused Mr. Nixon of the federal crimes of misprision (concealment) of a felony, impeding the due administration of justice and injuring and oppressing the Watergate defendants in the free exercise of their rights and privileges under the Constitution.

The President violated the Constitution, McCord charged, by denying the defendants the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment and due process of the law guaranteed by the Fifth Amendment,