

**President Now Seeking to Use Media
 To Present Viewpoint on Watergate**

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WASHINGTON, March 14— Over the last year, President Nixon has employed a number of defense strategies in the Watergate case, but he and his assistants are now on a new tack: That of "going public" to the extent that they are leaking information and using every opportunity the media afford to get their point of view to the public. This is a sharp departure from the past. For most of his five years in office, Mr. Nixon has sought to bypass the regular Washington press, which he distrusts, and appeal directly to the people through radio, television and personal appearances. He has opened several counterattacks in the Watergate case this way.

Only two months ago, Mr. Nixon declared that one year of Watergate was enough, and his press secretary, Ronald L. Ziegler, said that the White House was going to leave Watergate to the courts, stop discussing the subject and concentrate on running the Government.

For a number of weeks, the President's spokesmen, making disparaging remarks about "source stories" in which the officials quoted were not identified, have maintained that the confidentiality of the facts in the case should be preserved. Thus, the usual White House practice was not to comment on developments in the case.

Yet over the last few days there has been a barrage of statements, opinions, charges and leaks of information about Watergate coming from the White House on several levels. They include the following:

¶ James D. St. Clair, the President's chief attorney for Watergate, who for weeks refrained from submitting to questions, has begun holding interviews in which he comments on the issues in the case. His latest was an interview today on television in which he sought to minimize the conflicting statements Mr. Nixon has made as to what happened in his March 21 meeting with John W. Dean 3d, the former White House counsel.

¶ Bryce N. Harlow, a soft-spoken counselor to the President, who is very circumspect about criticizing members of Congress, with whom he must plead the President's cause, cause, openly accused Representative Wilbur D. Mills of engaging in McCarthy-like "innuendo" by saying that forthcoming disclosures about the President's income tax could be grounds for Mr. Nixon to resign.

¶ Ken W. Clawson, director of communications for the executive branch, leaked to reporters the fact that the staff of the House Judiciary Committee was seeking 42 additional Watergate tape recordings. Mr. Clawson did so confidentially, to bolster the White House argument that the committee was on a "fishing expedition," but his role

was made public by reporters engaged in the White House news briefings.

¶ President Nixon has sharply stepped up his own public defense in the Watergate matter, submitting to two Washington news conferences as indictments were being handed up. Tomorrow he will submit to more questions, by business executives in Chicago, and on Tuesday he will undergo another public examination by broadcast executives in Houston.

Influence of St. Clair

The change is described by the officials themselves simply as the president's taking advantage of opportunities to defend himself in a climate supercharged by accusations against him.

This, however, does not explain the sudden change. Some sources attribute the change in part to the influence of Mr. St. Clair, an experienced trial lawyer who knows how to put up a defense on several fronts. He said a few days ago that public comment is more in order now that the larger aspects of the case have moved out of the grand jury and before the trial court and the House Judiciary Committee.

In any event, the full-scale public relations effort is undoubtedly a strategy agreed to by the President and his closest advisers. And it is widely viewed as an attempt to hold onto the hard-core Nixon constituency as the case against Mr. Nixon unfolds.

According to the public opinion polls, this hard-core support is about 27 to 30 per cent of the adult population, possibly enough to persuade the Congress against impeachment and conviction.

Talks to Conservatives

There are several indications that the White House is acutely sensitive to Republican conservatives who have shown signs of wavering in their support of the President. He has made appearances largely before conservative audiences, ranging from the Veterans of Foreign Wars to the Young Republicans.

Further, the White House appears to be bending over backwards in an attempt not to offend the conservative elements in Congress, both Republican and Democratic.

A few weeks ago, for example, the Defense Department sent the name of Paul A. Nitze to the White House to be assistant Secretary of Defense, a move department officials believed would receive routine approval. However, the White House found that Senator Barry Goldwater, Republican of Arizona, and other conservatives were opposed. Consequently, the White House has done nothing about the appointment, setting off speculation at the Pentagon that the President's caution stemmed from Watergate.

"Beyond that," said an official close to the White House, "the idea of the media campaign is to create as many doubts as possible about the charges against the President."