

White House Says Little On Ruling to Release Data

*Aides Assert There Are No Objections
or Plans to Appeal Sirica's Decision
and Deny Connection With Wilson*

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By R. W. APPLE JR. MAR 19 1974
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WASHINGTON, March 18 — The White House greeted with studied indifference today Chief Judge John J. Sirica's decision to send a secret Watergate grand jury report to the House Judiciary Committee.

Although the report is believed to deal with the question of President Nixon's possible involvement in the Watergate cover-up, and although its transmission to the Judiciary Committee would surely provide ammunition to Mr. Nixon's critics, all was externally calm at the White House following Judge Sirica's decision.

Gerald L. Warren, the deputy Presidential press secretary, said that Mr. Nixon's position was still that stated last week by James D. St. Clair, the special White House counsel: no objection to the release of the secret report.

Other White House officials said that there would be no appeal of Judge Sirica's decision by Mr. St. Clair or anyone else representing the White House. They also denied published speculation that John J. Wilson, attorney for H.R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman, the deposed Presidential aides, was acting indirectly for Mr. Nixon in appealing the ruling.

Weapon for Rodino

Mr. Warren refused to say whether Mr. St. Clair, who had asked Judge Sirica for a copy of the report, would follow the judge's suggestion that he apply to Representative Peter W. Rodino, Democrat of New Jersey, chairman of the committee, if he wanted a copy.

But well-placed White House sources said that Judge Sirica had, perhaps inadvertently, given Mr. Rodino a powerful weapon. If Mr. St. Clair wants badly enough to see a copy of the grand jury report, they said, he may be forced to accede to some of Mr. Rodino's requests for additional documents.

On Capitol Hill, Mr. Rodino told newsmen that he would not comment on the possibility of providing a copy of the report to Mr. St. Clair until the committee had received all of the grand jury material.

Representative John Coners Jr., Democrat of Michigan, indicated some feeling that the committee was a strengthened bargaining position. He did not want the White House, he said, "to pull up to the House Judiciary Committee and paw through our files and cart documents away in a truck."

Ziegler Phrase Recalled

A similar phrase was used last week by Ronald L. Ziegler,

the White House press secretary, in responding to the committee's request for additional documents and tapes.

One of the key elements in the report is believed to be the grand jury's information about Mr. Nixon's March 21, 1973, meeting with John W. Dean 3d, then the White House counsel.

On Aug. 15, 1973, Mr. Nixon said that he had been told by Mr. Dean that payments had been made to the original Watergate defendants for attorney's fees and family support. On March 6, he said Mr. Dean had told him the payments constituted "hush money." On Friday, in Chicago, Mr. Nixon said Mr. Dean had only alleged that they were "hush money," and noted that other senior aides had disputed this point.

Reporters had pressed Mr. Warren and Mr. Ziegler repeatedly for clarification of the contradiction between the first two statements, only to be promised that the question would be addressed in some detail at a later date.

Clarification Alleged

Today, Mr. Warren insisted that the President's brief comment in Chicago—which modified the second version of his account of the March 21 meeting, rather than explaining the original contradiction—had clarified things.

Mr. Nixon "covered the point," Mr. Warren said.

Within the private counsels of the Administration, however, there was a feeling that the President had not dealt successfully with the matter. So elliptical and fleeting was his comment that many news accounts of his comment misinterpreted his meaning.

Some aides were reportedly pressing for a new, far more thorough public statement, which could conceivably come in another question-and-answer session tomorrow night at the convention of the National Association of Broadcasters in Houston.

Format Revised

Special to The New York Times

HOUSTON, March 18—The National Association of Broadcasters has revised its original plan for President Nixon's news conference tomorrow night.

Instead of leaving the questioning of the President to the management of broadcast stations, the organization has set up a panel of news directors to question the President from the stage of the 3,000-seat Jesse Jones Hall in Houston.