

St. Clair Defends The Transcripts

Washington

President Nixon's chief Watergate lawyer, James D. St. Clair, took strong issue yesterday with House Judiciary Committee counsel John Doar's statement questioning the reliability of transcripts of presidential conversations.

In a letter to committee chairman Peter W. Rodino (Dem-N.J.), St. Clair said Doar's assessment was "gratuitous in the extreme since he has no basis for making such a statement."

"I wish to take exception to Mr. Doar's statements to the committee this morning, joined in by Mr. (Albert) Jenner, that other than a part of one recorded conversation prior to March 21, 1973, nothing has been furnished to the committee," St. Clair said. "Mr. Doar glossed over the fact that the President has made available voluntarily every conversation delivered to the grand jury—19 in number.

"The committee's own experience in listening to tapes discloses the variety of meanings, degrees of inaudibility and the like that can exist," St. Clair said. "But I suggest that despite such verbal differences, the meaning of the entire conversation viewed as a whole is not subject to serious differences of opinion as to what is said. Differences, of course, can exist as to the interpretations that can be placed on the conversation."

In a brief news conference on the lawn outside the



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JAMES D. ST. CLAIR
The President's lawyer

White House. St. Clair repeatedly stressed to reporters that he could not understand why Rodino and ranking Republican member Edward Hutchinson will not come to the White House to review actual tapes for verification of the transcripts.

"Why they don't escapes me," he said. "And until that's done, I really don't see how they can say that these tapes do not accurately set forth what transpired."

Asked if he thought Mr. Nixon's refusal to comply with House subpoenas was an impeachable offense, St. Clair replied: "Not in my judgment because these subpoenas are far overboard—they call for materials that the committee doesn't even know that they exist."

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