

What Nixon Said on Defense Aid

Washington

President Nixon once voiced willingness to help H. R. Haldeman and John Ehrlichman pay their legal expenses — but never followed up, a White House official said yesterday.

The assertions by Deputy White House Press Secretary Gerald L. Warren came amid reports of secret testimony before the Senate Watergate committee that Mr. Nixon had told the two former aides that his friend C. G. (Bebe) Rebozo controlled a \$400,000 fund for their legal expenses.

"There is not now or was there ever any defense fund set up by the President," Warren said. But he added that when Haldeman and Ehrlichman were leaving his staff more than a year ago, Mr. Nixon "did express his deep personal concern that their sole significant



AP Wirephoto

H. R. HALDEMAN
'Unsolicited gifts'

source of income was being closed off."

Haldeman also denied the existence of such a fund.

According to Warren, Mr.

Nixon "in a natural and human way expressed a willingness to assist them in meeting those burdens if possible."

When a reporter referred to Mr. Nixon's expressed willingness to help and asked, "He never did anything about it?" Warren responded: "That's right."

Sources said Thursday that Lawrence M. Higby, once an aide to Haldeman, testified that Haldeman had told him that Rebozo controlled the fund that would be available for the legal defense of presidential assistants.

Warren coupled his denial of the existence of any such fund with renewed criticism of the Senate Watergate committee.

"We view this as another calculated leak from the Watergate committee . . .

designed to be politically damaging to the President of the United States and his former aides," Warren said.

Ehrlichman, meanwhile, told reporters that he had no knowledge of any fund established at Mr. Nixon's behest.

In Los Angeles, Haldeman said he had asked friends to set up a trust fund, but had never received any money from a White House fund.

"The only money I've received has been from unsolicited gifts of less than \$100 that have come in from around the country," Haldeman said.

Haldeman, interviewed in the doorway of his Los Angeles home while holding his fawn-colored Rhodesian Ridgeback, Rufus, on a leash, refused to answer any further questions.

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