

# The Illustrated Secret History of Watergate

## Conclusion:

### The Conspirators at Bay

By the Editors of *New York Magazine*  
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Despite conflicting and often confusing testimony, one of the most interesting things about Watergate is how much is known for certain about the planning, the break-in, and the subsequent cover-up. Many of the key events and personalities, as well as the locations of key actions, are attested to by memos, transcripts, and other documents, sworn eyewitness testimony, physical evidence, etc. But, because of the secret nature of many of these events, there were no television or newsreel cameramen and no still photographers present to make a pictorial record of deeds and misdeeds.

By drawing on the extensive documentation now available, we have reconstructed a number of these covert scenes. In the chronicle that continues in this issue, all of the events illustrated are known to have taken place; none is based on hearsay or one man's word.

In last week's issue ("The Cover-up Begins"), we reconstructed scenes that followed from the administration's decision to hide the facts of the Watergate break-in, as well as related "White House horrors." In this week's story, the cover-up continues to swell, with acts of increasing desperation by the White House as it found that news of the scandal could not be suppressed. Finally, with the firing of Archibald Cox by the President, the deluge was upon us, the country was shocked far more than it had been by the Watergate events themselves, and the nation prepared itself for the outcome of the greatest political confrontation of the century.

December 8, 1972

## A Secret Is Discovered In a Plane Crash

In the wreckage of a United Airlines 737, firemen find an attaché case that belonged to passenger Dorothy Hunt, who died in the crash. She was the wife of Watergate defendant E. Howard Hunt, and her attaché case contained \$10,000 in \$100 bills.

It was on a wet and foggy afternoon when the Boeing 737, flight 553, making a second approach at Chicago's Midway Airport, suddenly took a nose dive and crashed, killing 43 of the 55 passengers. A day later, a money-packed attaché case in the wreckage was identified as Mrs. Hunt's.

It did seem a little suspicious—all that cash. Hunt said his wife's trip was a "Christmas visit and exchange of presents" with her cousin, Mrs. Harold C. Carlstead. Mr. Carlstead said Mrs. Hunt was joining him in a business undertaking and the money was a payment toward a Holiday Inn franchise. Soon, though, the fabric of defenses and excuses began to go. Six months after her death, with the striking testimony of Anthony Ulasewicz, a retired New York City policeman who was employed by the administration, the network of cover-up money came to light.

To put it bluntly, Dorothy Hunt was running money from the CREEP treasury to Watergate defendants to keep them from talking. Ulasewicz described passing cash from Nixon's personal lawyer, Herbert Kalmbach, to "the writer's wife," Mrs. Hunt's code name. For a while Ulasewicz was persuaded it was a "humanitarian effort," but Mrs. Hunt began escalating her demands—she needed more money for herself, she was out a job, she had travel expenses. Ulasewicz grew suspicious and warned Kalmbach, who could not have been completely surprised, that "something here is not kosher."

In September of 1972, Kalmbach and Ulasewicz quit the hush-money delivery business and White House aide Frederick LaRue took charge. All told, Ulasewicz turned over more than \$175,000 to the Hunts and William O. Bittman, the Hunts' attorney.

Then, two months later, like the telltale cigarette case in *Seven Days in May* that was discovered in a suspicious plane crash, Mrs. Hunt's attaché case turned out to be evidence of a cover-up.

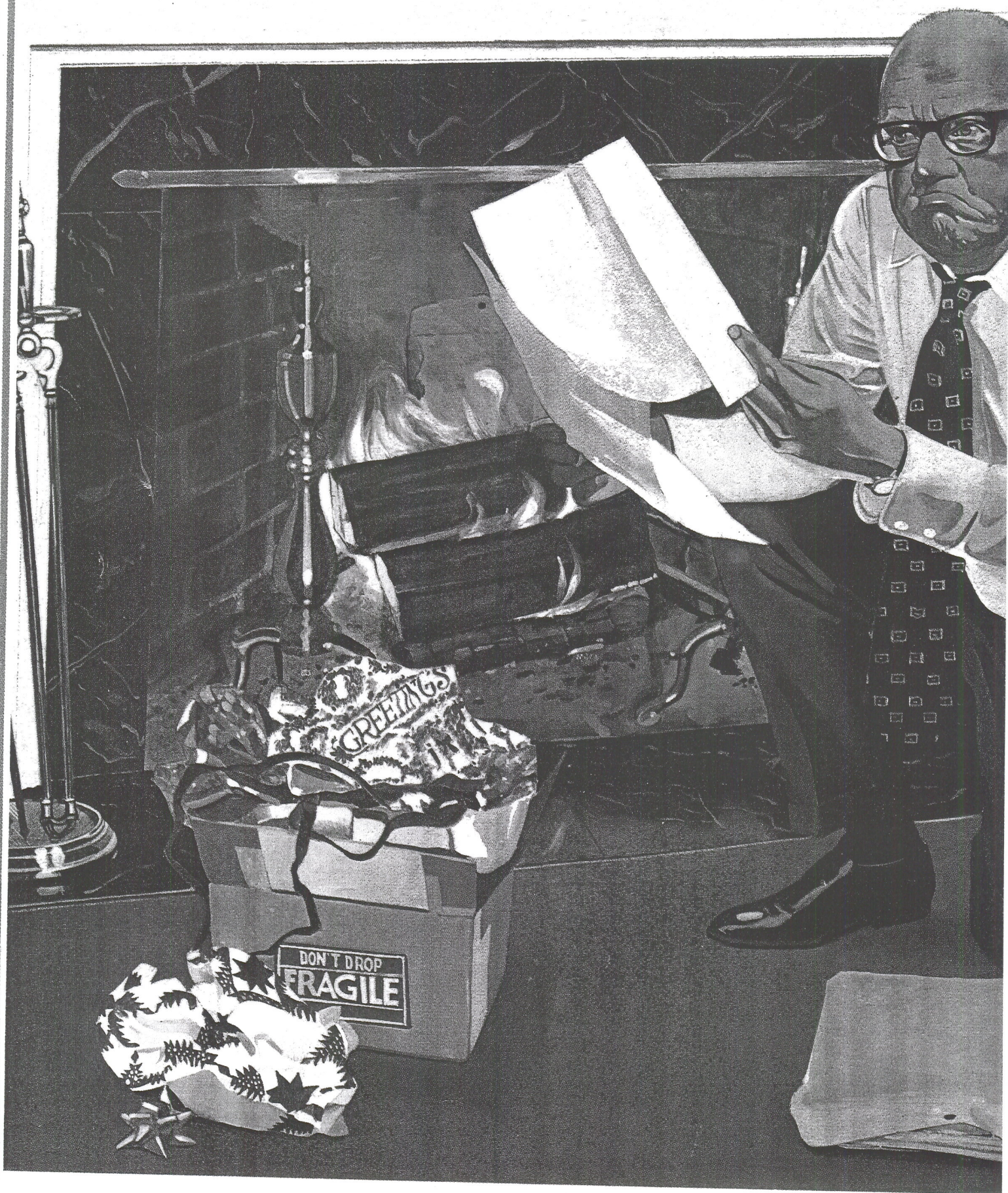


James McMullan



Painting by Jim McMullan









**Christmas Week, 1972**

## Patrick Gray Burns Hunt's File

At his home in Stonington, Connecticut, Acting F.B.I. Director L. Patrick Gray (left) burns files taken from Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt's Executive Office Building safe.

Hunt's office safe had contained a loaded pistol, the results of his investigation into Senator Edward Kennedy's Chappaquiddick accident, a psychiatric profile of Daniel Ellsberg, and forged telegrams linking the Kennedy administration to the assassination of South Vietnam President Diem.

On June 28, 1972, John Dean and John Ehrlichman presented Gray with two folders of Hunt's papers. Dean told Gray that the documents "clearly should not see the light of day." Gray was specifically instructed not to include them in his bureau's Watergate file, and as Gray understood it, the implication was that he should destroy the papers.

After keeping them first in his apartment, then in his office, then moving them to his Connecticut house, he burned them during Christmas week along with the holiday trash.

At his confirmation hearings, Gray testified that he had destroyed the papers unread, but he later admitted

that he had read each before he burned it. That admission was the culmination of the administration's plan to sacrifice Gray, to have him, as Ehrlichman put it, "twist slowly, slowly in the wind." On April 27, 1973, the day after his involvement in the cover-up was revealed, Gray resigned.

**January 12, 1973**

## McCord Rejects Clemency Promise

CREEP aide John Caulfield meets with plumber James McCord (right, above) at the second Potomac overlook on the George Washington Parkway outside Washington, D.C.

Four days into his trial, James McCord was becoming increasingly angry at being pegged as the Plumbers' "ringleader." He had rejected administration suggestions that he blame the C.I.A. for the Watergate fiasco, and the White House suspected that he was ready to talk. Alarmed, John Dean had Caulfield arrange a meeting. At their rendezvous, Caulfield urged McCord to plead guilty. On John Dean's instruction, he assured McCord that executive clemency was promised "from the very highest level of the White House." McCord refused clemency, however, and was convicted on January 30.



March 21, 1973

## Nixon Orders The Payment Of Hush Money

As testimony, tapes, and transcripts confirm, on this day a significant sequence of events took place. In the morning (first scene, reading left to right), John Dean tells Nixon the full story of Watergate and Nixon orders payment of hush money to the convicted conspirators. Obeying orders, CREEP official Frederick LaRue gives a money-filled envelope to co-worker Manyon Millican (second scene), who deposits it in the mailbox of Howard Hunt's lawyer in Potomac, Maryland (third scene). Upon retiring, Nixon talks into his Dictabelt (fourth scene) and sums up the day as "uneventful."

In the complex calendar of Watergate, one day—March 21, 1973—has taken on crucial significance. It first registered in the seamy saga on April 17, 1973, when Nixon issued the statement that "on March 21, as a result of serious charges which came to my attention . . . I began intensive new inquiries into this whole matter." During the Senate hearings, John Dean confirmed that on that day he warned Nixon of "a cancer growing on the Presidency" and laid before him the details of Watergate and the cover-up.

As that key date continued to crop up, one question in particular loomed large: What was said, during the Dean-Nixon meeting, about the payment of hush money to the convicted Watergate defendants? Nixon and Haldeman maintained that the tape of the meeting proves that the President had said it would be "wrong" to make payments to the defendants in exchange for their silence.

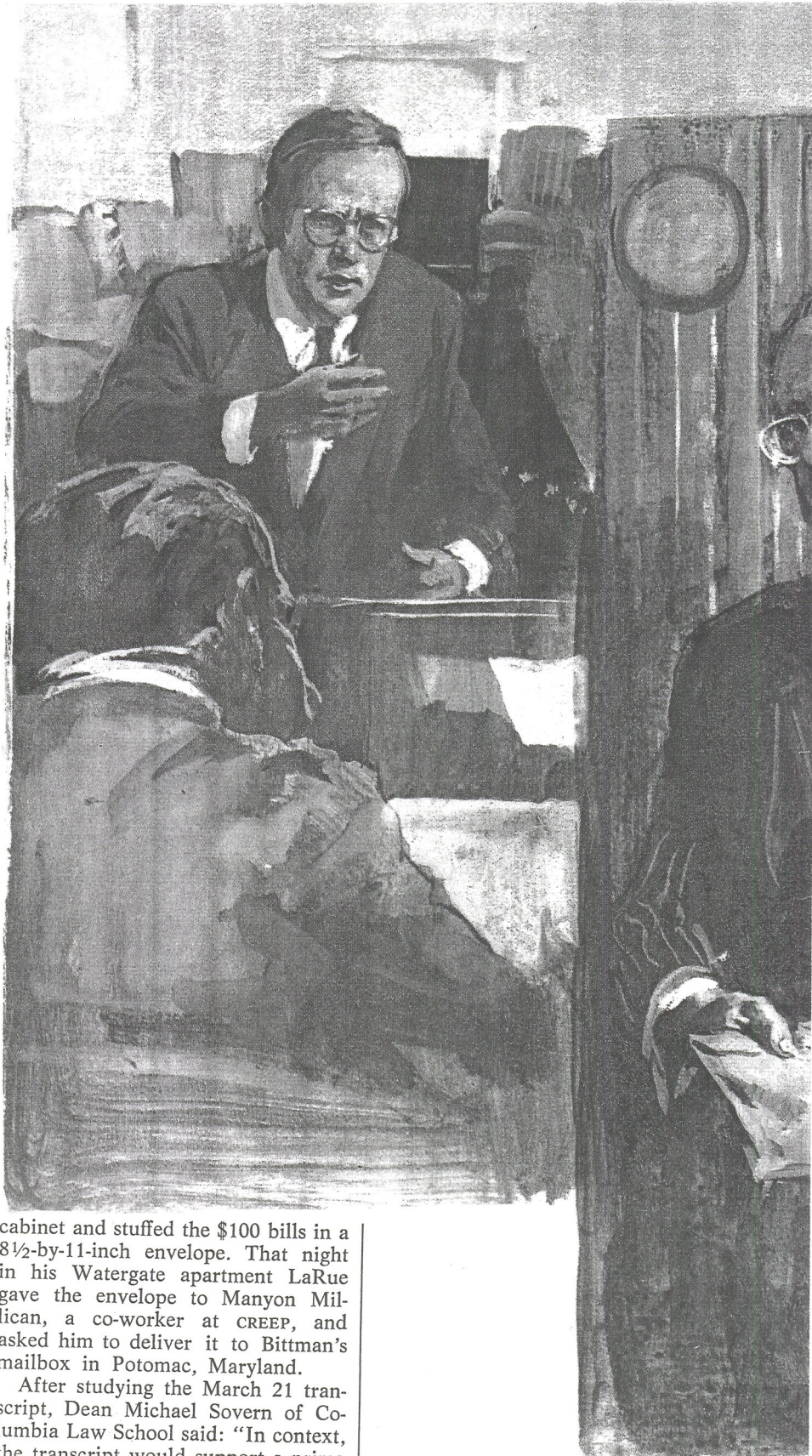
The transcript and tape of that now-famous morning meeting in the Oval Office convey quite a different story. In the course of the almost two-hour conference, Nixon discussed hush money eight times and concluded that, besides taking care of "the jackasses who are in jail," paying off Hunt was the "prime thing" that "damn well better" be done. "You have no choice," he said decisively, "but to come up with the \$120,000," and exclaimed, "(Expletive deleted), get it!"

Nixon's command was promptly acted upon. That same day John Mitchell instructed Frederick C. LaRue of CREEP to make a payment to Hunt's lawyer, William O. Bittman. LaRue took \$75,000 out of his file

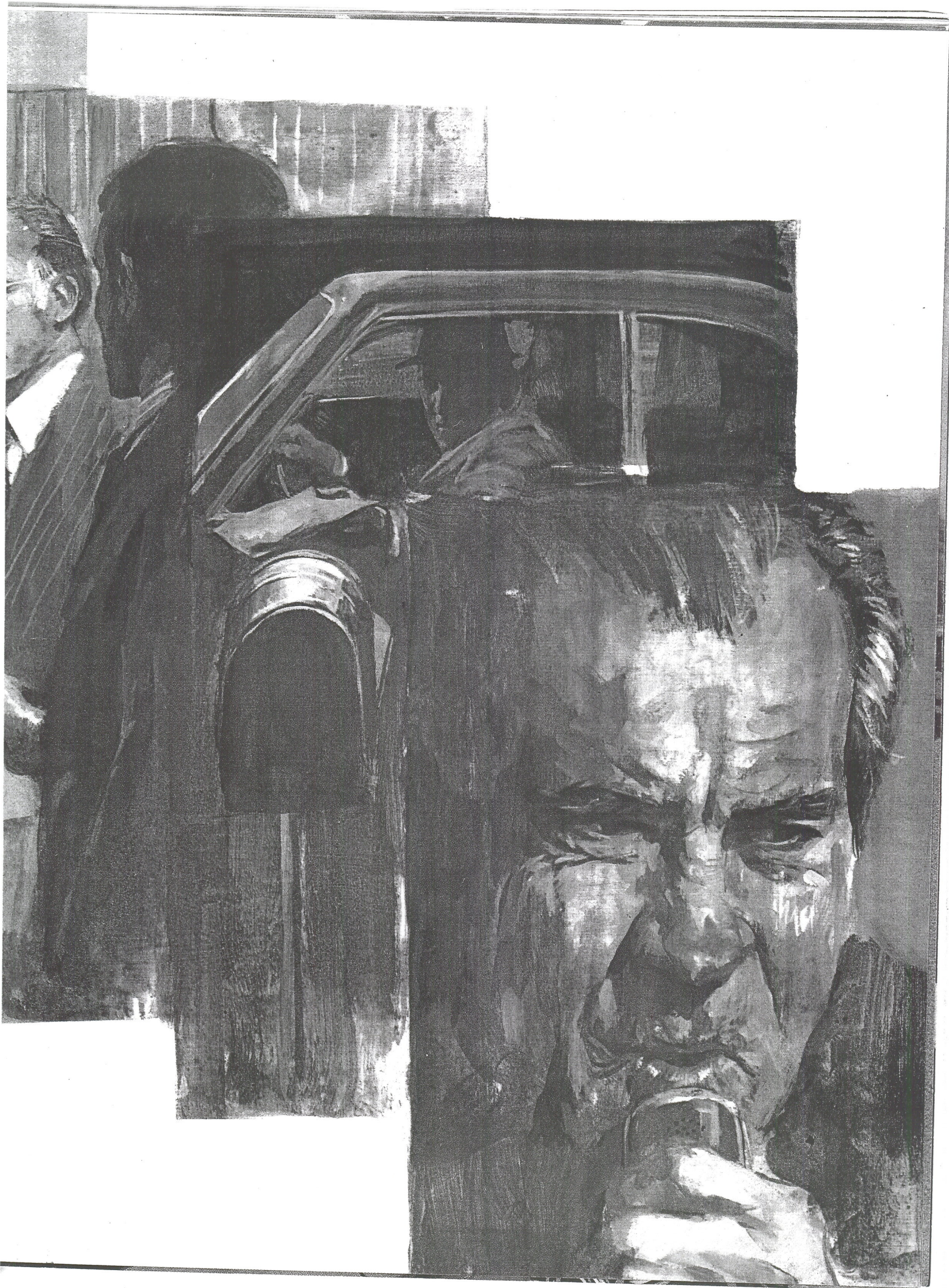
cabinet and stuffed the \$100 bills in a 8½-by-11-inch envelope. That night in his Watergate apartment LaRue gave the envelope to Manyon Millican, a co-worker at CREEP, and asked him to deliver it to Bittman's mailbox in Potomac, Maryland.

After studying the March 21 transcript, Dean Michael Sovern of Columbia Law School said: "In context, the transcript would support a prima facie case for impeachment." And a former Nixon administration official exclaimed: "If I were Pete Rodino [chairman of the House Judiciary Committee], I'd say we don't need anything else. I'd say thank you, Mr. President—and *adiós*."

Curiously, at the end of that incriminating twenty-first day of March, Nixon, talking into his Dictabelt, described it as an "uneventful day."











April 5, 1973

## Ellsberg's Judge Gets an Offer

At San Clemente, White House aide John Ehrlichman introduces Judge Matthew Byrne, then presiding over the Ellsberg trial, to the President.

The Nixon administration had a special interest in the trial of Daniel Ellsberg and Anthony Russo, who had acknowledged leaking the "Pentagon Papers," the secret account of American involvement in Vietnam. Near the end of the trial Byrne learned of government actions—wire-tapping, the burglarization of Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office, and Acting F.B.I. Director Gray's destruction of Hunt's files—that would, all by themselves, have tainted the government's case. Then on May 2 Judge Byrne announced from the bench that he himself had met with John Ehrlichman on April 5 at San Clemente. During that meeting Ehrlichman, following Nixon's orders, had offered Byrne the directorship of the F.B.I. The offer had, at the very least, the appearance of a bribe. Subsequently Byrne threw the case out of court, observing in his dismissal statement, "The totality of the circumstances of the case offends a sense of justice."

October 18, 1973

## Cox Refuses Nixon Ultimatum

Special Watergate Prosecutor Archibald Cox, visiting his brother's McLean, Virginia, home for dinner, sits on the hallway floor and listens to Nixon defense lawyer Charles Alan Wright deliver "some conditions you can't accept."

Archibald Cox was assured by the President and Congress when he was appointed special independent Watergate prosecutor in May, 1973, that he would have full independence in investigating the scandals that were racking the Nixon administration.

Cox not only requested evidence in pursuit of his investigations, he went to court to get it, subpoenaing tapes of relevant and possibly incriminating conversations. Nixon, fearing a confrontation with the Supreme Court, decided to avoid complying with the subpoena by curtly issuing a "compromise" through attorney Wright the day before the tapes were due: Nixon would give Cox summaries of the conversations, which one person, pre-selected by Nixon, would audit and verify. "In return," Cox would subpoena no other tapes, notes, or memoranda from the White House

—in short, he would halt his investigation. Cox declared the compromise inadequate. Whereupon Nixon, in a stunning move of political expediency, ordered Attorney General Elliot Richardson to fire him. Richardson resigned rather than fire Cox, as did Deputy Attorney General William Ruckelshaus. The sealing and padlocking of the special prosecutor's offices by seven F.B.I. agents (the 90-person staff were informed their jobs had been abolished) completed the debacle that was quickly labeled the Saturday Night Massacre.

The White House attempted to justify the firing by whittling down Archibald Cox's character (depicting him as defiant, self-serving, and intransigent beyond compromise), and by trying to minimize the action (just another "employee of the executive branch," explained chief executive Richard Nixon).

Nevertheless, the country rose in indignation and anger. Protesting telegrams, phone calls, and letters inundated the government. Congress, in the midst of confirming Gerald Ford as vice-president, debated whether a President in such straits should even be allowed to appoint a successor. After his dismissal Cox quietly stated, "Whether we shall continue to be a government of laws and not of men is now for Congress and the people to decide." Impeachment had begun to slouch towards possibility.



