

Nixon Witness Not Quite Clear

Washington

Frederick C. LaRue, summoned before the House Judiciary Committee yesterday at the request of the White House, apparently failed to refute an important element in the charge that President Nixon approved or tolerated the payment of alleged hush money to a convicted Watergate burglar.

Republican and Democratic members of the committee said last night that LaRue, a former official of the President's 1972 re-election committee, could not recall with precision when on March 21, 1973, he discussed the payment of \$75,000 to E. Howard Hunt Jr.

The key conversation at issue was between LaRue and John W. Dean III, the ousted White House legal counsel.

James D. St. Clair, the counsel, told the committee last week that Dean had advised LaRue of demands by Hunt for money on the morning of March 21—before, and not after, a meeting at which the President spoke of meeting the demands "to keep the cap on the bottle."

But LaRue told reporters, after more than four hours of questioning by committee lawyers and members and St. Clair, that his recollection of the telephone conversation with Dean was imprecise.

"To the best of my recollection it was (in) the morning," LaRue said, "but it could have happened some other time."

Committee members also reported that LaRue was uncertain whether he had talked about the money demands in the morning or the afternoon of March 21—in the latter case, after Mr. Nixon was aware of the demands—with former Attorney General John N. Mitchell.

St. Clair reportedly had sought to demonstrate through the testimony of La-

Rue and four other individuals that he urged the committee to call as witnesses, that there was no direct connection between the President's March 21 discussion of the hush money demands with Dean and the payment of \$75,000 to Hunt later the same day.

Representative Robert McClory of Illinois, the second ranking Republican, said LaRue's testimony had neither helped nor harmed the President's defense.

The committee, which has been denied about 150 taped conversations by the President, will make public today its transcripts of eight of the 19 recordings Mr. Nixon yielded to the impeachment inquiry earlier this year.

In addition, the committee will issue a staff analysis of a number of key discrepancies between the panel's transcripts and the edited versions published by the White House.

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