

LaRue Reportedly Tells House Judiciary

Says That He Consulted With Mitchell on Funds

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WASHINGTON, July 8—Frederick C. LaRue, the intermediary in an alleged Watergate hush money payment, reportedly told the House Judiciary Committee today how he dispatched \$75,000 to a convicted Watergate burglar after consulting with former Attorney General John N. Mitchell.

The Judiciary Committee, resuming closed impeachment hearings after a four-day holiday recess, questioned the onetime official of President Nixon's 1972 re-election committee at length about the payment to E. Howard Hunt Jr. on March 21, 1973.

Mr. LaRue's testimony was delayed until late today, however, so that James D. St. Clair, the President's chief defense attorney, could join in oral argument of the Watergate tapes case before the United States Supreme Court.

Several members of the committee took advantage of the hiatus to sit as spectators in the audience this morning at the Supreme Court hearing.

"Just rubbernecking," said Representative William S. Cohen, Republican of Maine. He and the other members said that it was not possible, based on the hearing, to determine how the Court would rule on Mr. Nixon's refusal to comply with the special Watergate prosecutor's subpoena of tapes of 64 White House conversations.

The Court hearing, and the testimony later by Mr. LaRue, illustrated once more how central the tape recordings had become to the inquiry into the possible impeachment of the President.

Mr. Cohen said that if the Court should rule against Mr. Nixon and the President should fail to comply fully with the subpoena, the confrontation would "add impetus" to the impeachment movement.

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

Staff Analysis Due

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

Among the conversations to be included in the committee transcripts is a long meeting on March 21 of last year at which the President discussed the hush money demands with John W. Dean 3d, the former White House legal counsel.

Mr. LaRue reportedly described to the committee today his role in the transfer of \$75,000 of surplus 1972 re-election campaign funds a few hours after the March 21 meeting.

Mr. LaRue told a Federal grand jury last Feb. 13 that he was informed early on the day of the payment, by Mr. Dean,

that Mr. Hunt was demanding \$60,000 in attorney fees and \$70,000 for living expenses. At the time, Mr. Hunt was awaiting sentencing for his part in the burglary of the Democratic party offices in the Watergate complex the previous June 17.

According to accounts of Mr. LaRue's grand jury testimony, he said that Mr. Dean had conveyed "a sense of urgency" about the money demands but had declined to authorize the payment, suggesting instead that Mr. LaRue consult with the former attorney general.

The central issue in terms of the impeachment inquiry, appeared to be whether the President directed or knowingly acquiesced in the payment to Mr. Hunt.

Mr. St. Clair has sought, on behalf of the President, to show that the \$75,000 payment was initiated before Mr. Dean told Mr. Nixon of the money demands on March 21.

Accordingly, Mr. LaRue's description of a conversation with Mr. Dean before the meeting could bear on the White House defense against charges that Mr. Nixon joined in the conspiracy.

But the Watergate grand jury, which named Mr. Nixon

in an indictment handed up last March 1, linked the March 21, 1973, Nixon-Dean meeting with subsequent developments in the \$75,000 payment.

Mr. LaRue told the grand jury that at mid-day on March 21, after the crucial meeting, he discussed Mr. Hunt's demands with Mr. Mitchell. Mr. LaRue reportedly said that he had characterized the demands as a request for legal fees and that Mr. Mitchell had approved the payment.

The indictment further alleged that the conversation between Mr. Mitchell and Mr. LaRue followed a discussion—also after the March 21 meeting—between Mr. Mitchell and H. R. Haldeman, the former White House chief of staff. Mr. Haldeman had been at part of the meeting in which the President and Mr. Dean discussed the money demands.

Mr. Haldeman has told the Judiciary Committee, through his lawyer, that he would not testify if called as an impeachment witness.

Mr. Mitchell, who is likely to be summoned as a witness later this week, reportedly was interviewed informally by the committee staff last Thursday. He was said to have balked at testifying to the full committee but to have said he would not refuse to answer questions if subpoenaed.

An Important Witness

Thus, Mr. Mitchell, who was consecutively Mr. Nixon's law partner, manager of his 1968 Presidential campaign, Attorney General and director of the 1972 re-election campaign, could prove to be the most important witness in the March 21 events.

According to memorandums submitted to the committee by Mr. St. Clair, Mr. Mitchell would testify that he did not discuss the money demands in the March 21 telephone conversation with Mr. Haldeman. In addition, the White House lawyer suggested, Mr. Mitchell would state under oath that he authorized the payment to Mr. Hunt in the belief that it was a legitimate request for assistance in meeting attorney fees.

The Judiciary Committee is also expected to hear from Mr. Dean before completing the closed hearings and beginning, probably late next week, deliberations into whether the panel should recommend that Mr. Nixon be impeached.

Panel of \$75,000 Payment to Hunt

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