

1,200 Solicited for Haldeman Fees Fund

By Gerald Paris
Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES, Aug. 16 → A group of 1,200 business executives sympathetic to the Nixon administration has been solicited by mail to support a legal expense fund for H.R. (Bob) Haldeman, the former presidential staff chief now under indictment in connection with the Watergate scandals.

Letters were mailed from Los Angeles over the signature of Z. Wayne Griffin, a Hollywood film producer in the 1940s and '50s now semi-retired with a variety of business and civic interests.

In a telephone interview, Griffin—who described himself as a close family friend of Haldeman for many years—said he got the idea to organize the fund three or four months ago but held off because Haldeman was “embarrassed” by the concept.

Three weeks ago, however, Haldeman gave his consent and the fund was organized, Griffin said.

Griffin indicated no money had been received yet, but said it was too early to expect a return as the letters, dated Aug. 8, were mailed only last weekend.

Although no fund-raising goal was contained in the letter, it estimated that the Haldeman legal expenses in connection with Watergate will “exceed \$350,000 — possibly considerably more.” The letter goes on to state, “There is no way he can assume this burden alone, nor should he, in any event.”

Haldeman, who now lives in Los Angeles, is scheduled for trial Sept. 9 in Washington, D.C., together with six other defendants, on a charge of conspiracy to obstruct justice in connection with the Watergate cover-up. However, the trial may be delayed.

In his letter, Griffin notes that Haldeman has denied

“any improper conduct,” and adds, “I believe him. So do all those who have known him and seen his selfless giving of time, talent and effort over the years . . .”

He went on, “Bob’s ultimate innocence will have to be determined by judicial process.

In the meantime, however, he is entitled to the presumption of innocence and to the very best possible legal defense.

“There is little doubt that history will reveal Bob and most of his associates as dedicated young American patriots victimized by a massive twist of political persecution. History will applaud them. It is our privilege to recognize and help them today—now!

“Bob remains confident, hopeful, cheerful, full of determination. Given the financial support he deserves and must have, he believes he can combat and win the trials ahead. What we do for Bob today, therefore, will compound itself in the immediate future.”

During the telephone interview, Griffin said the shattering events of the final Nixon week in Washington—culminating in the resignation of the President—didn’t alter his feelings about the conduct of Haldeman and other aides involved in Watergate.

“In the heat of battle, people make mistakes. I can’t believe any of this was for selfish gain or the derogation of the country. I feel they all were dedicated to what they thought was right and good,” he said.

The Griffin letter asks recipients to make checks payable to the “H. R. Haldeman Legal Expense Fund” or “Crocker National Bank, Trustee.” A Los Angeles post office box is given for the receipt of contributions or correspondence.

It adds that in the “opinion of counsel” contributions will be “subject to the normal tax provisions for gifts, and will not qualify as deductible contributions by the donor.

Griffin named as trustees of the fund two Los Angeles business executives and Hal-

deman friends, John Leisure and Richard Miller.

An addendum to the letter states that the fund is being raised not only to defend Haldeman in the federal indictment, but in connection with seven suits in which he is named. They have to do with campaign, civil rights and wiretap matters.

It goes on to say that Haldeman is writing a book on the Nixon years in which his principal objective is “to set the record straight in an interesting, insightful and informative way. . . .”

He hopes to offset part of his legal expenses with the income from the book as well as cover his living expenses for the two or more years the legal matters apparently will take, the Griffin addendum adds.

A few months ago a similar defense fund was started by a Seattle business executive for John D. Ehrlichman, another indicted Nixon assistant. Griffin said there is no connection between the two.

26, 27 Jul

10, 11 Aug

See memo attached
to SFC version of
same story.