

SFChronicle
Coverup Trial Evidence

Nixon Tape Mentions Ford

Washington

On a White House tape played publicly for the first time yesterday, Richard M. Nixon said House Republican leader Gerald R. Ford should try to head off a House investigation of the 1972 Watergate break-in.

"Jerry's really got to lead on this. He's got to really lead," Mr. Nixon said on the tape played to the 12 jurors in the Watergate coverup trial.

The tape of Mr. Nixon's Sept. 15, 1972, conversation with aides H. R. Haldeman and John W. Dean III was played first.

Every person in the silent courtroom — the jury, Judge John J. Sirica, the five defendants, their lawyers, and the 100 persons in the audience — wore earphones to hear the tape. The jury and reporters had transcripts to follow the conversation more easily.

The House Judiciary Committee, during its impeachment inquiry, and the Nixon White House previously had released transcripts of the conversation, so little new of substance was learned.

But the tapes revealed impressions.

Dean, who testified moments earlier that he had spoken with Mr. Nixon previous to that day only at a half-dozen ceremonial occasions, grew in confidence and spoke much more frequently as the 49-minute conversation progressed, the tape showed.

Haldeman, the White House chief of staff with a reputation for being stern and all-business, laughed frequently on the tape.

Mr. Nixon clearly was in charge.

The recorded conversation took place on the afternoon following the first series of indictments in the burglary of Democratic National Committee headquarters.

Mr. Ford's name came up as Mr. Nixon, Dean and Haldeman discussed an investigation that Representative Wright Patman (Dem-Tex.), chairman of the House Banking and Currency Committee, was conducting.

"Uh, what about Ford? Do you think so? Do you think he can do anything with Patman?" Mr. Nixon asked.

"I don't think anybody can do anything with Patman," Dean said. "But if, if Ford can get the minority (Republican) members, uh, together on that one, it's going to be a lot . . ."

". . . But you see, Widnall (Representative William B. Widnall) — let's take somebody — Jerry could talk to him," Mr. Nixon said. "Put it down, uh, Jerry should talk to Widnall and, uh, just brace him, tell him I thought it was (unintelligible) start behaving."

Former Attorney General John N. Mitchell; former White House aides Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman; former Assistant At-

torney General Robert C. Mardian; and Nixon re-election lawyer Kenneth W. Parkinson are in the 13th day of their trial for conspiracy in the Watergate coverup.

A second tape was played yesterday afternoon — that of a Dictabelt recording made by former White House special counsel Charles W. Colson of a conversation he had with accused Watergate burglar E.

Howard Hunt Jr. on Nov. 13, 1972.

During the 18-minute telephone conversation, Hunt told Colson, who had been his patron in hiring him at the White House: "Ah — well, the reason I called you was to make, uh — get back to the beginning, here — is because of commitments, uh, that were made to all of us at the onset, have not been kept."

Colson repeatedly told Hunt not to tell him anything because "right now I don't know anything about the Goddamned Watergate and did not want to learn anything about it."

Hunt, however, returned repeatedly to his statement that promises made to him and the other defendants had not been kept.

Dean testified that Colson brought him the dictabelt and that he made a cassette copy of it the same afternoon. Dean said he took the cassette to Camp David two days later and played it for Haldeman and Ehrlichman.

Dean said that at Ehrlichman's instructions he flew to New York the same afternoon "to have Mr. Mitchell take care of the problem, Mr. Hunt's problem." He said Mitchell didn't respond to the Ehrlichman suggestion about raising more money for the Watergate defendants.

Dean testified that later, however, Mitchell told him in a telephone conversation to ask Haldeman whether some of a secret \$350,000 White House cash fund could be used temporarily for the defendants. Dean said he passed on Mitchell's request to Haldeman the first week of December.

"I told him (Haldeman) the purpose was to pay the defendants to keep them on the reservation and to satisfy their demands and commitments," Dean said as testimony ended for the day.

Dean said Haldeman authorized that either \$40,000 or \$70,000 be used for that purpose.

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