

Dean Tells Plan To Nail Mitchell

Washington

John W. Dean III testified yesterday that he and other senior White House aides decided in March, 1973, that to solve their Watergate problems, John N. Mitchell would have to admit guilt for the break-in at the Democratic National Committee.

Dean said that the idea lapsed when neither H.R. Haldeman nor John D. Ehrlichman proposed to Mitchell that he take blame as planned.

Mitchell, former U.S. attorney general and former Nixon aides Haldeman and Ehrlichman are among five defendants at the Watergate coverup trial.

In his fourth day on the witness stand, Dean said a meeting on March 22, 1973, was called, and either Ehrlichman or Haldeman was to suggest that Mitchell "step forward and account for activities prior to June 17."

The original Watergate burglars were caught at Democratic National Committee Headquarters on June 17, 1972.

In answer to questions from prosecutor James F. Neal, Dean testified that he and other White House officials were hopeful "that (Mitchell's move) would eliminate investigation of activities after June 17."

Dean also testified that he had proposed on March 21 that Mitchell "admit his guilt" for the break-in.

Meanwhile, the jury heard a sixth White House tape in which former President Nixon declared on the afternoon of March 22, "We're going to protect our people, if we can."

The jurors heard Mr. Nixon say in a flat emotionless tone to Mitchell: "I want you all to stonewall it, let them plead the Fifth Amendment, cover up or anything else, if it'll save it — save the plan. That's the whole point."

William G. Hundley, Mitchell's lawyer, had earlier made an unsuccessful attempt to bar the jury from hearing portions of the March 22 tape, on the ground that Dean was present for only part of the meeting it records.

U.S. District Judge John J. Sirica, however, denied that effort, allowing Dean from the stand to say that no one entered or left Mr. Nixon's Executive Office Building office once Mr. Nixon and Mitchell continued a meeting only among themselves.

After the 15th day of the trial, Dean was scheduled to return today for more prosecution questioning.

The jury also heard a fifth White House tape yesterday in which Mr. Nixon talked at a meeting with Haldeman, Dean and Ehrlichman about how to handle the various Watergate investigations, which were growing closer and closer to the White House.

The tape recorded a late afternoon March 21, 1973, meeting at which Dean proposed that White House aides be immunized from prosecution and then go before a grand jury.

Although the meeting ended inconclusively, Mr. Nixon and Ehrlichman opposed Dean's idea in favor of sending Dean to write a general report which they hoped

would satisfy Watergate investigators.

Earlier on the same day, Dean testified, he had another meeting with Ehrlichman and Haldeman, but not the President.

Dean said there he proposed that they "draw the wagons around the White House."

Asked by Judge Sirica what that meant, Dean replied "It is a sort of cowboy and Indian phrase which means to protect all of the people inside the White House from the people on the outside."

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