

Dean Tells of Bid to Save Himself

Washington

John W. Dean III admitted after repeated questioning yesterday that in an effort to save himself he had joined in a plan to have John Mitchell take the blame for the Watergate break-in.

He did so, Dean conceded, even though he had no evi-

dence that Mitchell had approved the bugging plan that led to the break-in.

Dean made his admissions in his second day of cross-examination at the Watergate coverup trial, where he is the chief prosecution witness and Mitchell and four other one-time White House

and Nixon campaign aides are the defendants

It was a day marked by a series of heated arguments — among lawyers for the prosecution and lawyers for the defense, and, often involving presiding Judge John Sirica.

Chief prosecutor James F.

Neal told the court that a number of government witnesses — not including Dean — might be giving accounts that were only 75 per cent or 85 per cent true.

Sirica said that former President Nixon might be called as a "court witness"

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rather than as a witness for any of the parties, a legal procedure, he noted, in which "nobody would have to vouch for his credibility."

Sirica also told the lawyers and everybody else crowded into his small courtroom at the U.S. courthouse that he is "not trying to try this case on strict rules of evidence."

He turned to the jurors at one point and told them that he wanted to get the full story about Watergate and that one word "summed up" the case — "truth", he said. Then, his voice firm, he proceeded to spell it out, "t-r-u-t-h."

The defense lawyers complained repeatedly throughout the day about one or another of Sirica's rulings. At one point the judge allowed Neal to interrupt the cross-examination and ask Dean some questions of his own.

John J. Wilson, attorney

for H.R. Haldeman, objected that Sirica allowed this deviation from regular practice whenever some matter came up that was "sensitive" to the government.

Dean made his admissions about Mitchell under great pressure from Mitchell's attorney, William G. Hundley, and, indeed, sought at least for a while to justify his attempt to blame Mitchell by contending that Mitchell wanted to do the same to him.

Dean had testified earlier about a meeting he held in mid-March, 1973, with Haldeman and John Ehrlichman, another of the defendants at the trial. At the meeting, Dean had testified, a plan "evolved in which Mr. Mitchell would be asked to step forward and take the blame for Watergate."

"You joined in the plan," Hundley asked, to "save yourself?"

It would have saved "everyone at the White House," the witness replied.

"You had no real evidence that Mr. Mitchell authorized this bugging?" Hundley went on.

"No sir, not direct evidence."

Earlier in the day, under questioning by Wilson, Dean had admitted — equally reluctantly — to various mistakes in testimony he had given during the Senate Watergate hearings in 1973. Essentially, the mistakes involved Dean's giving inaccurate dates as to some of the meetings with Mr. Nixon that he had described to the committee — particularly, statements he had attributed to meetings on February 27 and March 13, 1973.

It was this exchange that caused one of the loudest arguments of the day, with Wilson, Neal and Sirica all raising their voices to near-shouts.

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