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New Tape-- Nixon Talks Of Clemency

Washington.

Former President Nixon planned a publicity buildup to make it easier to grant executive clemency to E. Howard Hunt Jr. on the day Hunt went on trial for the Watergate burglary, according to a White House tape made public for the first time yesterday.

"Hunt's is a simple case," Mr. Nixon told Charles W. Colson, a special counsel who had interceded for Hunt, a college friend.

"We'll build that son-of-a-bitch up like nobody's business," Mr. Nixon said. "We'll have Buckley write a column and say, you know, that he, that he should have clemency, if you've given 18 years of service."

The tapes of that conversation and several others were played for the jury yesterday at the Watergate coverup trial of former Nixon lieutenants H. R. Haldeman, John D. Ehrlichman and John N. Mitchell and re-election committee aides Robert C. Mardian and Kenneth W. Parkinson.

More than two months after the Jan. 8, 1973, conversation and repeatedly thereafter, Mr. Nixon denied that he had authorized clemency to be offered to Hunt or any other of the seven-man burglary team because, as he told John Dean, "It would be wrong."

Mr. Nixon's talk with Colson was later in the afternoon on January 8, the first day of jury selection for the trial of Hunt, G. Gordon Liddy, James W. McCord Jr. and four others charged in the Watergate break-in and bugging.

Three days later on January 11, after the prosecution had outlined its case, Hunt pleaded guilty to all six counts in the indictment against him. He later was sentenced to 2 1/2 to eight years in prison.

The conversation showed

that Mr. Nixon wanted to give Hunt clemency because of information involving the White House that he might reveal at the trial and before investigating bodies.

About two months earlier, in November, 1972, Hunt had demanded money from the White House and threatened to tell some of the "seamy things" he had participated in, including the burglary of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office, forging Vietnam cables to smear the Kennedy administration.

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and spiriting ITT figure Dita Beard out of Washington.

Mr. Nixon apparently had been told that Hunt would plead guilty at Colson's urging. However, that part of the conversation was unintelligible in the tape played for the jury. Mr. Nixon is heard saying, "I think it's the right thing for him to do, Chuck."

But Colson told Mr. Nixon that McCord and Liddy probably would go to trial and that the guilty plea of the others would be good because a lot of facts would not come out.

Colson is heard telling Mr. Nixon that "Liddy is kind of dumb, he said he didn't want any part of it" (a guilty plea or clemency).

In a partial quotation Mr. Nixon is heard saying that he was glad about that because, on a question of clemency, "Hunt's is a simple case."

This sequence then followed:

Nixon: I mean, uh, after all, the man's wife is dead, was killed; he's got one child that has . . .

Colson: Brain damage from an automobile accident.

Nixon: We'll build, we'll build that son-of-a-bitch up like nobody's business. We'll have Buckley write a column and say, you know, that he, that he should have clemency, if you've given 18 years of service.

Colson: (unintelligible).

Nixon: That's what we'll do.

Colson: He served under Hunt in CIA, of course. (un-

intelligible).

Nixon: We'll (unintelligible) them after. That's that's it. Let's on the merits. I would have difficulty with some of the others.

Columnist William L. Buckley Jr. was a long-time friend of Hunt's and had served under him in the Central Intelligence Agency in Mexico.

Buckley, reached in New York, said, "I don't need to be reminded to write a column urging clemency even for sons - of - bitches, as Mr. Nixon should know from personal experience."

The reference to Hunt's child was to his daughter, Lisa, who suffered severe brain damage in an automobile accident when she was driven to the Hunt home in Potomac, Md., from a visit to friends in suburban Virginia.

In his book of memoirs Hunt wrote that her long hospitalization created a tremendous debt and he then retired from the CIA after 21 years to make more money in private life.

Colson had gone to the President on Hunt's behalf despite the urgings of other White House officials that he not do so. Former counsel John W. Dean remembered that in a conversation on April 15, 1973, when the Watergate scandal was breaking, Mr. Nixon took him aside and murmured that he shouldn't talk about clemency with Colson.

The Hunt demands for money, termed blackmail by the White House, and the question of clemency promises to him were the focus of much controversy in the Watergate case.

Early in the January 8 conversation Mr. Nixon told Colson:

"I know it's tough for all of you, Bob, John and the rest. We're just not going to let it get us down. This is a battle, it's a fight it's war and we just fight with a little . . . we'll cut them down one of these days."

Colson expressed at that point the hope that not too much would come out to damage the Nixon presidency at the original Watergate trial.

Mr. Nixon, looking ahead

apparently to congressional investigations of the scandal, told Colson "as long as this trial is going on, the Congress will keep its goddamn cotton pickin' hands off that trial."

He told Colson that all of the defendants in that trial undertook the burglary "knowing the risks."

The jury, which will hear tape recordings for most of the rest of the government's case, also heard a recording of a conversation between Mr. Nixon and Haldeman in the Oval Office on March 20, 1973. That was before Mr. Nixon said he had been told the whole story of Watergate by Dean.

In the March 20 conversation Haldeman told Mr. Nixon that he was convinced prosecutors were going after Colson because "they think he's the highest guy they can get (on criminal charges) in the White House and Mitchell on the outside."

"He's the attorney general of the United States," Mr. Nixon replied, and Haldeman began, "As the attorney general of the United States and . . ." The President finished the sentence:

"The President's campaign manager. That's pretty goddamned bad."

Haldeman then warns that after the two top men were accused, "You start working your way back down that chain again and maybe you can't turn it off somewhere . . ."

Later in the conversation Haldeman tells the President that investigators would discover "Mitchell was clearly aware and fully aware of the Liddy intelligence operation. No question about that."

Mr. Nixon retorts, "But maybe not of the specific . . ."

Haldeman: "But maybe not of the specific act."

Mitchell has denied that he ever authorized the Watergate burglary.

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