

Nixon's Cash Offer To Two Top Aides

Watergate Trial Hears Disclosure

Washington

The prosecution read to the jury at the Watergate coverup trial yesterday the transcripts of two previously undisclosed conversations in April, 1973, in which former President Nixon offered \$200,000 to \$300,000 in cash to John D. Ehrlichman and H.R. Haldeman.

April, 1973, according to testimony at the trial, was the time when the Watergate coverup was beginning to come apart, with some Nixon aides beginning to cooperate with the federal prosecutors.

The prosecution contended that Mr. Nixon made the offer in the "context" that the three men "all understood they were protecting each other."

Richard Ben-Veniste, an assistant special prosecutor, made the contention in presenting the transcripts of tape recordings as part of his cross-examination of Haldeman, who, along with Ehrlichman, is among the five defendants in the trial.

Haldeman contended that the President's offer was simply to help his two aides meet the huge legal fees that they then appeared likely to be faced with. He also told the jury that neither he nor Ehrlichman had accepted the offer.

The first transcript, of a conversation on April 17, shows Mr. Nixon telling his two aides that there was a fund used by "Bebe," his friend Charles G. Rebozo, for "getting things out."

Mr. Nixon told his aides that there was "no strain" and that the money "doesn't come outta me," and that he had, in fact, told Rebozo to use the money to "be sure that people like, uh, who, who have contributed money over the contributing years,

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are uh, favored and so forth in general."

The second transcript, of a conversation on April 25, quotes Mr. Nixon as asking his aides if they could use "cash" and then telling them that "there are a few, not much (unintelligible) as much I think as 200 there's available in '74 campaign already."

This transcript quotes both Haldeman, who was then the White House chief of staff, and Ehrlichman, who was Mr. Nixon's chief domestic affairs adviser, as saying, "I don't think so."

The transcript goes on to quote Haldeman as remarking — and the Mr. Nixon as agreeing — that payments to the two men "compounds the problem."

Ben-Veniste questioning Haldeman after he read the transcript, contended that the "problem" was that hundreds of thousands of dollars had been paid to the seven who participated in the Watergate break-in.

Haldeman had told the jury after the first transcript was read that the President had offered the money because of the legal fees that his two aides were facing. When Ben-Veniste made his charge about the "problem" being that of the payments to the Watergate burglars, Haldeman reacted angrily.

"No," he said. "Absolute-

ly untrue."

The disclosure about Mr. Nixon's offer and the prose-

cution's charge that the offer was made in the course of the three men "protecting" one another were the high points of the day's proceedings. There were other developments:

- The prosecution filed with the court three other previously undisclosed portions of White House tape recordings, in which Mr. Nixon and his aides discuss ways in which the aides can "preempt" the anticipated testimony by John W. Dean III, then Mr. Nixon's counsel, about the March 21, 1973, discussion in which Mr.

Nixon said that money could be raised to pay off the Watergate burglars.

The transcripts, portions of which were read to the jury, show among other things Mr. Nixon telling Haldeman and Ehrlichman that their "line" about the March 21 conversation would be that Mr. Nixon was "conducting an investigation and finding out what, where this thing went."

Ben-Veniste, in the course of cross-examining Haldeman, contended that Haldeman was "not being truthful" in his testimony to the jury and said that the White House tapes showed the inconsistencies.

- Haldeman contended that Mr. Nixon's remark in the March 21 meeting that "it's wrong, that's for sure" referred to both paying off the burglars and giving them clemency, and not just to clemency, as the prosecution contends and the transcript appears to show.

- Former Attorney General John M. Mitchell, another defendant in the trial, contended in a written motion to the court that the evidence at the trial showed that "Mr. Nixon may have participated in a conspiracy which carefully excluded Mr. Mitchell's membership, and which was designed to have an extremely adverse effect on Mr. Mitchell's well being." The motion asked that Mitchell's attorneys be allowed to take a deposition from Mr. Nixon as soon as he is well enough to do so.