

John Dean and Funds for Ford

Washington

The Nixon administration learned in 1972 that Gerald Ford, then the House Republican leader, "might have some problems" involving contributions to some of his congressional campaigns, according to an as yet unpublished memoir by John Dean III.

"Blind Ambition," Dean's account of the Watergate crisis, is scheduled for publication in November. Dean served as counsel to former President Nixon during much of that period.

In writing about White House efforts four years ago to head off a House probe of the financing of the June, 1972, Watergate break-in, Dean recalled the allegation against Mr. Ford and some other House Republicans.

According to an excerpt of the book made available to the New York Times, Dean said he learned from John Connally, then secretary of the treasury, that Representative Wright Patman, whose committee was undertaking the investigation, might not have reported some campaign contributions allegedly

received from an "oil lobbyist" in Washington.

But Dean said the White House rejected a plan to use that information to head off the inquiry by the House Banking and Currency Committee, after Dean himself was told by William Timmons, one of Mr. Nixon's congressional lobbyists, that Mr. Ford who had also been pressed into service to help halt the inquiry, "might have some problems in this area" himself.

Dean said that shortly before the banking committee was scheduled to vote on whether to seek subpoena power in its investigation of the financing of the Watergate burglary, he asked Timmons, who now operates a private consulting firm here, whether the White House "ought to dig into" the allegations about Patman.

He quoted Timmons as having replied, "Well, John, you know, this is kind of sensitive, and I talked to Jerry (Ford) about it."

"Jerry doesn't think it would be such a good idea and, frankly, I'll tell you, the problem is that, uh, Jerry himself might have some

problems in this area, and so might some of our guys on the committee."

Dean said he concluded, "I guess that scraps that," and he said that Timmons replied, "Yeah, I guess it does."

Timmons, in a telephone interview, termed Dean's assertion "an absolute lie, a bold-faced lie." He said he had never spoken with then-Congressman Ford about the impending Patman hearings, which failed to occur after committee Republicans and a few Democratic members combined to reject a proposal for an expanded inquiry.

The incident recounted in Dean's book parallels his testimony in 1973 before the Senate Watergate Committee, in which the young lawyer first disclosed his conversation with Connally about the contributions to Patman, a Texas Democrat who died in office earlier this year.

"I discussed this matter with Bill Timmons, and he concluded that several Republicans would probably have a similar problem, so the matter was dropped," Dean told the Watergate committee. But his

testimony contained no mention of Mr. Ford as having been among those who might be adversely affected.

The disclosure of the passage of the Dean book concerning President Ford followed by a day reports that the special Watergate prosecutor's office had issued a subpoena for all records compiled during the past 12 years by the Kent county, Mich., Republican Committee, in Mr. Ford's old congressional district.

The prosecutor, Charles Ruff, declined to elaborate on the reason for the subpoena, and there has been no public indication that it, or a separate subpoena issued to the Marine Engineers Beneficial Association, the largest contributor to Mr. Ford's 1972 congressional re-election campaign, was in any way related to the President's finances.

It is not known whether Dean, who cooperated extensively with the Watergate prosecutor, and who, at one point was given an office in the prosecutor's quarters in which to reconstruct his knowledge of the Nixon administration's activities, has made any allegation to the prosecutor involving wrongdoing by Mr. Ford.

Dean was not available for comment on his assertions, nor did Ron Nessen, the White House press secretary, return a reporter's telephone call.

The only portion of the memoir made available to the New York Times was the passage concerning Mr. Ford, and one Republican operative said he did not believe that the timing of the disclosure, coming as it did a day before the initial public debate between Ford and Jimmy Carter, the Democratic presidential candidate, was coincidental.

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