

Nixon Talked to Lawyer For 2 White House Aides

President Met With Attorney Retained by Haldeman and Ehrlichman in the Inquiry Into the Watergate Case

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WASHINGTON, April 24 — President Nixon met for an hour here last Thursday with John J. Wilson, a Washington lawyer who is representing two Presidential aides, H. R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman, in connection with the Watergate scandal.

Gerald L. Warren, the deputy White House press secretary, announced the meeting at a news briefing in Key Biscayne, Fla., where the President ended his Easter weekend today. But Mr. Warren was unable to answer the questions that reporters asked about the meeting. Who had initiated it? What had the two men discussed? Would Mr. Nixon retain Mr. Wilson to represent himself?

"I have no report to give you on the discussions," Mr. Warren said.

While many other members of the White House staff and of the committee for the reelection of the President have retained lawyers individually, it remained unclear why Mr. Haldeman, the President's chief of staff, and Mr. Ehrlichman, a counselor on domestic affairs, had hired the same lawyer.

Mr. Haldeman is thought to be a prime target of the continuing Senate and grand jury investigations of the break-in at the Democratic National Committee Watergate offices last summer and efforts to cover up the episode since then.

Telephoned Three

Mr. Warren said that the President, who left most of his traveling entourage in Washington last weekend, called Mr. Ehrlichman and Mr. Haldeman, as well as John W. Dean 3rd, the White House counsel, on Sunday "to wish them well at Easter."

The President's spokesman also reiterated that there was "no change in the status of White House staff members."

Meanwhile, Mr. Ehrlichman engaged Clark MacGregor, Mr. Nixon's 1972 campaign manager, in a fresh dispute about official efforts to get to the bottom of the Watergate affair last summer.

In an interview with The Washington Star-News, Mr. Ehrlichman was quoted as having said he had proposed last August "not only to the campaign manager but to the whole campaign planning group that the time was right to make the fullest disclosure about Watergate."

Mr. MacGregor, who took over the campaign when John N. Mitchell, the former Attorney General, left it in July, disagreed sharply.

Said He Wasn't Told

"It may be that John, in his own individual circles, was talking with some anxiety about Watergate," said Mr. MacGregor, a former Representative from Minnesota who now represents the United Aircraft Corporation in Washington. "But that concern was never communicated to me."

When he took over the campaign, Mr. MacGregor recalled, Mr. Mitchell had conducted one investigation of campaign personnel and Mr. Dean was working on another of the White House staff. Late in August, he said, Mr. Ehrlichman asked him to issue a fresh statement on Watergate, but "no one could provide me with anything new or newsworthy."

A proposed "white paper" that Mr. Dean drew up at the time was "deficient in both content and tone," he said. "It struck me as somewhat superficial and self-serving," he added.

However, Mr. Ehrlichman was quoted as having said that there had been a specific request for a further inquiry into the re-election committee and a plan to announce the results after Aug. 30, when the President flew to Hawaii.

"I'm not prepared to say who was responsible for side-tracking the proposal," Mr. Ehrlichman said.

Report on Rogers

Other Watergate developments included the following:

¶The American Broadcasting Company reported tonight that William P. Rogers, the Secretary of State who is one of Mr. Nixon's oldest political friends, had been assigned a house-cleaning job to restore the integrity of the President's personal staff. Contrary to the ABC news report, however, Mr. Rogers was not in Florida

over the weekend but in Williamsburg, Va., and he was reported planning to leave early next month for an 18-day trip through Latin America.

Mr. Rogers spent an evening alone with Mr. Nixon on the Presidential yacht Sequoia last Monday night on the eve of the President's announcement of major new developments in the Watergate case. But a source close to Mr. Rogers said he had not been asked to undertake any new activity in connection with the case.

¶John B. Connally, the former Secretary of the Treasury, and Melvin R. Laird, former Secretary of Defense, were also being mentioned in Washington rumors as possible new White House chiefs of staff if the President ousts all the aides who have been mentioned in the Watergate investigation.

¶The Federal grand jury that has been taking new testimony on the watergate raid and the subsequent cover-up did not convene today in the courthouse here. Sources close to the investigation said that the break in the proceedings was related to official concern about the leaks of grand jury transcripts to Jack Anderson, the syndicated columnist. It could not be determined whether or not the grand jury was meeting elsewhere.

¶Speaking under a court order before another grand jury here, Peter H. Wolf, a lawyer, finally named his former client, a minor functionary at the Nixon re-election committee, who removed eight cartons of campaign documents from White House offices last summer. Mr. Wolf declined afterward to tell reporters who his client was.

¶Kenneth Reitz, who joined the Republican National Committee two months ago to direct Senate and House election campaigns next year, was reported this morning to have resigned his job and left town without explaining why. George Bush, the Republican party chairman, expressed no regret at Mr. Reitz's departure but referred all questions to Mr. Reitz, who was unavailable. Mr. Reitz, 31, directed the Nixon campaign among young voters last year and was described as

an intimate friend of Jeb Stuart Magruder, the deputy campaign manager, who has told federal prosecutors that he helped plan the Watergate bugging.

¶The White House categorically denied reports that President Nixon had offered executive clemency to James W. McCord Jr., convicted Watergate conspirator, if McCord would remain silent about the case.

Offer "Not Made"

Mr. Warren declared in Florida: "The President has not made such an offer, nor have there been any discussions with the President about executive clemency." Asked if anyone else in the Administration might have made the offer, Mr. Warren said, "The President is the one who grants executive clemency."

¶Senator Robert J. Dole of Kansas sharpened the attack on the White House staff but said that the Republican party, of which he was national chairman until last January, has "nothing to hide and so nothing to fear from the current controversy." Addressing butter and cheese producers in Chicago, Senator Dole said it was "entirely conceivable" that the Watergate plot had been planned without the President's knowledge. "You need only know the players involved," he said of Mr. Nixon's aides.

Martha Mitchell, wife of the former Attorney General, will be asked to testify before the Watergate grand jury, according to The Washington Post. Neither prosecutors nor Mrs. Mitchell, who has repeatedly expressed fear that her husband will be made a Watergate scapegoat, could be reached for comment today.

Meanwhile, lawyers for Common Cause, the so-called citizens' lobby, said that the Nixon campaign staff might have secreted records last year in the National Archives Building here. They have subpoenaed James B. Rhoads, the Archivist of the United States, to answer questions on the matter in connection with their suit for full disclosure of the Nixon campaign's financing.