

No More to Be Released, St. Clair, Haig Maintain

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By Laurence Stern

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President Nixon's chief Watergate lawyer and his White House chief of staff served notice on national television yesterday that President Nixon has handed out all the "relevant" tapes and transcripts he intends to in the Watergate scandal.

Now is the time for Congress and the American people to make their final assessment of the President's implication in the case, they both concluded.

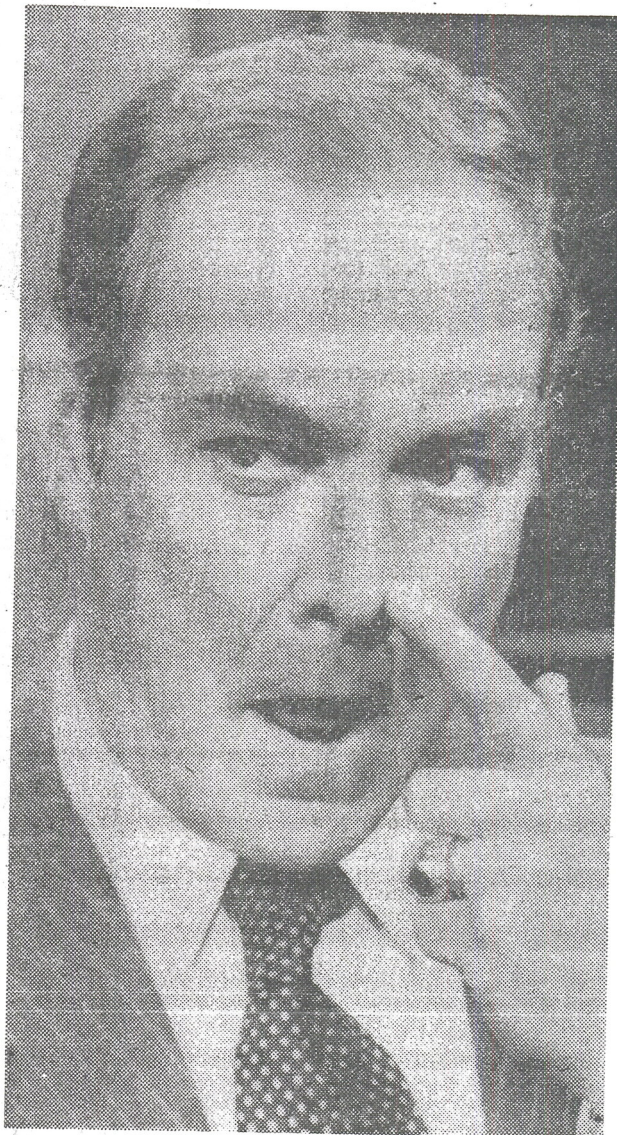
This was the joint message issued in separate network appearances by Watergate special counsel James D. St. Clair and Chief of Staff Alexander M. Haig Jr. It was consistent with the hard defensive line struck by the White House since the release of the edited Watergate tapes last week.

"The President has now put out for public assessment what we consider to be all the relevant information on the Watergate story," Haig declared on the ABC-TV program "Issues and Answers" (VMAL).

St. Clair, preceding his White House colleague on NBC's "Meet the Press" panel (WRC), said the President has given the House Judiciary Committee everything he thinks it needs to decide on impeachment. The President hopes, said St. Clair, that the House committee agrees with Mr. Nixon on the sufficiency of evidence.

But even as they spoke, two members of the House Judiciary Committee — one a Republican and one a Democrat — disagreed with the White House position. Reps. Tom Railsback (R-Ill.) and Paul Sarbanes (D-Md.) insisted that the actual tapes of the Watergate conversations should be heard by all 38 members of the House impeachment panel, rather than just the chairman and senior Republican member as President Nixon proposed.

Railsback and Sarbanes, appearing jointly on CBS's "Face the Nation" program, (WTOP) also took exception to the White House position against granting immunity to witnesses before the Judiciary



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Alexander Haig: "All the relevant information . . ."

Committee. Both suggested that it may be necessary to grant immunity to some witnesses in order to get the full story. Ranking GOP member Rep. Edward Hutchinson of Michigan said Saturday he would oppose immunity in the impeachment investigation.

St. Clair reiterated the President's claim that the first "allegation of criminality" in connection with Watergate was made by John W. Dean III on March 21, 1973. Asked about the disclosure in the edited transcripts that Dean had told the President on

March 13 that White House aide Gordon C. Strachan had twice lied to prosecutors, St. Clair acknowledged that this was an allegation of criminality.

But he added: "It is not the kind of criminality that would have involved the President or the presidency." Strachan, a former aide to Mr. Nixon's former chief of staff, H. R. (Bob) Haldeman, has been indicted and pleaded not guilty to perjury.

Mr. Nixon also expressed concern during the March 13

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conversation over Haldeman's possible implication in the Watergate affair. When informed by Dean of Strachan's involvement, the President remarked: "Well, then, he probably told Bob (Haldeman). He may not have."

On Feb. 28 the subject of clemency for the Watergate defendants was taken up by Dean and the President, and at one point Mr. Nixon asked his counsel: "Do they expect clemency in a reasonable time? What would you advise on that?" Dean responded: "I think it is one of those things we will have to watch very closely . . ."

Speaking of the tapes being demanded by the House Judiciary Committee, as well as other investigative bodies, Haig commented, "I think some of the mythology associated with these tapes would be dispelled quite rapidly if the American people could all hear them."

"The tape itself and the difficulties involved in discerning what has actually been said in a conversation which is totally unstructured. . . . It is a discussion that is recorded by a very rudimentary system which was not designed for the kind of tests being put today. . . ."

Formal subpoenas and requests for additional tapes have been submitted to the White House by the Judiciary Committee, the Senate Watergate committee and Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski.

Jaworski wants tapes of 63 conversations for the Watergate cover-up prosecution. The Judiciary Committee wants tapes of 141 conversations, including those involving the ITT case, donations by milk producers and the circumstances surrounding a \$100,000 contribution by financier Howard Hughes which ended up in the safe of the President's friend C. G. (Bebe) Rebozo. The Senate committee is also suing for access to tapes of Dean's conversations with the President.

Haig decried the "excessive introspection" with Watergate and called upon the members of the Judiciary Committee to "make their judgments and to get on with the business of the American people."

Yesterday's appearances by Haig and St. Clair were part of the administration's stepped-up counteroffensive

against the impeachment drive in Congress. Both were scheduled by White House Director of Communications Ken W. Clawson.

Haig uttered the theme of the White House public opinion blitz yesterday with the declaration that "I think the time has come for all of us to ask ourselves a pretty fundamental question: at what point in the review of wrongdoing does the review itself involve injustices, excesses and distortions which . . . result in the cure being worse than the illness itself?"



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James D. St. Clair: The panel has all it needs.