

Rowland Evans and Robert Novak

... And the Deception of Their Own

The depth of White House deception of President Nixon's own official family reached a barely credible low point in February when two top White House aides promised Secretary of Commerce Frederick Dent that Jeb Stuart Magruder was wholly innocent of any involvement in Watergate and ordered Dent to hire him.

Frederick Malek, who had been the President's personnel chief before becoming deputy director of the Office of Management and Budget, was one of those two aides.

It is entirely possible that Malek was personally unaware of Magruder's deep involvement in Watergate, but that in itself would be a most sinister possibility. It would mean that the

White House aides who did know the facts were using an unwitting Malek as their agent to place such Watergate-tainted aides as Magruder in the new and high government posts.

But White House counsel John Dean III, described by former high administration officials as the second of the two White House aides involved in selling Magruder to Dent, most definitely did know all about Magruder's Watergate involvement.

Dean was the author of the in-house Watergate report for the President last summer which completely whitewashed the White House of any Watergate involvement. For Dean not to have known about the complicity of Magruder, then with the Committee for the Re-Election of the President, is inconceivable.

But White House pals of Magruder, a protege of ex-staff chief H. R. Halde- man, apparently felt more loyalty to Magruder for having agreed to deny under oath any Watergate knowledge or complicity than to Dent or to President Nixon's Commerce Department.

Dent, clearly concerned about what amounted to a White House order to give Magruder a \$36,000-a-year job which did not require Senate confirmation, was told by the White House that Magruder had been "cleared by the (Watergate) grand jury" and that Dent had nothing to worry about. Dent also told friends that under American jurisprudence, a man is innocent until proven guilty.

Magruder worked in his Commerce Department job, driven around town in a chauffeured limousine paid for by the Committee for the Re-Election of the President, until he was fired on April 27. That was shortly after he went back to federal prosecutors and began to sing.

An extraordinary private communication from sponsors of the big (but undersold) fund-raising dinner May 9 for the House and Senate Republican campaign committees contains a flat statement that "The Republican Party was not involved and ought not to be implicated in the Watergate incident."

That quote, from an April 25 statement by Sen. Robert Dole of Kansas, former party chairman, was included in a communication to party fat cats under the letterhead of "New Majority Dinner Committee," which said:

"At no time has the Republican National Committee or its financial arm, the Republican National Finance Committee, or the congressional or senatorial committees, been accused of any wrongdoing in their political activities or handling of campaign funds last year."

The reason for this appeal for mercy, based on the fact that the White House-supported Committee for the Re-Election of the President had no links to the Republican National Committee, is the threatened failure of the May 9 fund-raising dinner to yield anything like what it should. As of two days ago, less than \$600,000 in cash had been taken in, about half the goal for one week before the event itself.

Sponsors of the dinner hoped the claim by Dole that the "Republican Party" as such had nothing to do with Watergate will appeal to the party loyalty of regular donors who are just as disillusioned with the Committee for the Re-Election of the President and with Watergate as are Dole and the party professionals.

"The fact remains," said the unsigned letter mailed 10 days ago to 26,000 Republican donors, "that many of our supporters identify these (regular party) committees as part and parcel of what they are reading in their papers. This is very unfortunate because the 'Watergate affair' has had an effect on our fund raising. . . we cannot let these committees be hurt financially and in turn politically, by activities last year of which they had no part."

No Republican-controlled White House in this century has been criticized so frontally by the regular party organization.