

The Story Ehrlichman Told Probers

Washington

John D. Ehrlichman, once one of President Nixon's closest advisers, has told Senate investigators he believed shortly after the Watergate burglary that high officials of the President's re-election campaign had been involved in the operation.

But Ehrlichman, in an interview with the investigators on May 4, refused to say whether he told Mr. Nixon of his belief. Ehrlichman contended that the doctrine of executive privilege barred him from disclosing his conversations with the President.

A 33-page summary of Ehrlichman's interview with the staff of the Senate Watergate committee was prepared by the staff afterward and was made available to the New York Times yesterday.

NARRATIVE

The summary is written in narrative form, paraphrasing Mr. Ehrlichman's answers to the interrogators' questions.

Ehrlichman, who had resigned as the President's chief domestic adviser four days before the interview after the Watergate disclosures, denied any role in planning the burglary or in covering up the facts about it.

But Ehrlichman, in the

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words of the summary, acknowledged having made a conscious effort "to get as little knowledge as possible" in the months after the burglary, because he knew he would have to testify in civil proceedings arising from the Watergate affair.

POINTS

The former presidential adviser also made the following points in his interview with the committee staff:

- He approved payments to the Watergate defendants last July, but he did not know that the payments were intended to buy their silence or that the money had come from campaign funds.

- He learned about the break-in at the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist soon after it happened in 1971. Ehrlichman said he expressed dismay and disapproval over that burglary but did not report the incident to anyone else.

- He attended a meeting at which "sensitive" documents from the safe of E. Howard Hunt, one of the convicted Watergate conspirators, were turned over to L. Patrick Gray III, then acting director of the FBI, and he learned later that Gray had burned the files. But he said that he did not give Gray instructions to destroy the records.

- He received a \$20,000 personal loan within the last year from Herbert W. Kalmbach, Mr. Nixon's former personal lawyer, who raised money to give to the Watergate defendants.

At the time of the staff interview with Ehrlichman in May, the White House position was that conversations between the President and his aides were covered by executive privilege and

could not be related to Senate investigators.

That position has now changed, and Mr. Nixon has said that his current and former aides should tell all they know to the investigators.

According to Senate officials, Ehrlichman has not been interrogated since the May interview. But they said that he would be questioned again before he testifies in public before the committee. Ehrlichman's public appearance is not scheduled for at least another two or three weeks.

BELIEF

Ehrlichman told the interrogators that soon after the Watergate burglary last June he began to believe that Jeb Stuart Magruder, deputy director of the president's reelection campaign, and perhaps other high officials of the campaign were involved in the burglary.

Ehrlichman said that he had at least two group meetings with top presidential advisers about the involvement of campaign officials.

Among those at the meetings, according to Ehrlichman, were Clark MacGregor, the campaign director after July 1; H.R. Haldeman, former White House chief of staff; Charles W. Colson, former special counsel to the president, Bryce Harlow and Fred V. Malek, ranking campaign advisers, and possibly Ronald Ziegler, the president's press secretary.

REJECTION

Ehrlichman, according to the interview summary, contended that throughout these meetings "I was urging that we should get to the bottom of it. If there was any responsibility at any level at the committee it was time to make a clean breast of it."

But Ehrlichman said that his view was rejected be-

cause of the opposition of MacGregor and John N. Mitchell, who had resigned as campaign director on July 1 but who still acted as an adviser.

According to the summary, Ehrlichman said that Haldeman's reaction to the suggestion of "making a clean breast of it" was "neutral."

On the matter of providing money to the Watergate defendants, Ehrlichman told the investigators that John W. Dean III, then the President's counsel, came to him several weeks after the Watergate break-in and told him that Mitchell wanted Ehrlichman's approval for Kalmbach to raise attorneys' fees for the men who were in jail.

Ehrlichman said Dean had told him Mitchell was "very anxious to have Kalmbach's help."

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