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Nixon Repeats His Rebuff Of Dean on 'Hush Money'

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 22— President Nixon repeated today that he had concluded in March that it would be "wrong" to attempt to buy the silence of the seven defendants in the Watergate burglary with promises of executive clemency or "hush money" when the idea was broached by John W. Dean 3d, his former counsel.

In response to a question at his San Clemente news conference, the President said he had told Mr. Dean that "we can't give clemency" to the seven men, and that payments of funds to keep them from talking would have amounted to obstruction of justice. [Question 13, Page 28.]

Reiterating the position that he had taken all along, Mr. Nixon again contradicted sworn testimony by Mr. Dean before the Senate Watergate committee that the President had told him there would be "no problem" in raising up to \$1-million to meet the demands of the seven men convicted in the case.

Mr. Dean also testified before the committee that Mr. Nixon told him on March 13 that he, the President, had conveyed an offer of executive clemency to E. Howard Hunt Jr., one of the five men who pleaded guilty in the case, through John D. Ehrlichman, then Mr. Nixon's chief domestic adviser.

Mr. Ehrlichman has denied transmitting the alleged offer.

Mr. Nixon said today that simply raising "defense funds for any group, any individual" involved in a criminal trial "is perfectly legal and is done all the time."

But he said Mr. Dean had characterized the demands for money from the convicted defendants as an attempt "to blackmail the White House," and that his reaction had been that the demands would probably escalate to include clemency.

"Isn't that correct?" the President said he had asked Mr. Dean, adding, "He said, 'Yes.' I said we can't give clemency. He agreed."

Mr. Nixon said he had then continued that while it was "quite obvious" that a million dollars could be raised, "the problem was, how do you get the money to them?"

"I said, 'John, it's wrong, it won't work, we can't give clemency and we've got to get this story out,'" the President added.

Lawyers in the office of Archibald Cox, the special Watergate prosecutor, have received evidence that at least four of the other defendants in the case had been offered a "package deal" by Hunt of executive clemency after serving "a little less than a year" in prison, payments of \$1,000 a month to support their families during their incarceration, and "rehabilitation" after their release.

H. R. Haldeman, the former chief of the White House staff, told the Senate committee in July that Mr. Nixon had, in fact, made the comment that there

would be "no problem" in raising support money, but had added, "that would be wrong." Mr. Nixon said today that Mr. Haldeman's testimony "is accurate."

Mr. Dean also accused the President of saying during an April meeting that he had "only been joking" about the million dollars, and that "he was probably foolish to have discussed Hunt's clemency with Colson," referring to Charles W. Colson, a former White House special counsel who Mr. Dean alleged had transmitted the offer from Mr. Ehrlichman to Hunt.