

Boston Attorney to Head Nixon Watergate Defense

By William Claiborne
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President Nixon has named James D. St. Clair, a Boston trial attorney with a reputation as a brilliant courtroom tactician, to handle the Watergate defense as impeachment proceedings draw closer in the House.

A methodical trial advocate whose apprenticeship in difficult adversary proceedings dates back to the 1954 Army-McCarthy hearings, St. Clair will head a staff of a dozen White House attorneys dealing with Watergate-related legal affairs.

The White House announced in San Clemente yesterday that J. Fred Buzhardt Jr., who has headed Mr. Nixon's special Watergate legal team since May 10, has been elevated to the position of White House counsel.

He fills the post last held by John W. Dean III, who was fired by Mr. Nixon in the wake of Watergate disclosures.

Leonard Garment, Mr. Nixon's other principal Watergate attorney, will return to his former position as assistant to the President.

Deputy White House press secretary Gerald L. Warren said Buzhardt will participate

See ST. CLAIR, A10, Col. 1

ST. CLAIR, From A1

occasionally in the Watergate defense, but that "as time goes on" will become absorbed in other duties.

He made it clear that St. Clair is now entirely in charge of the President's Watergate defense. Previously, Buzhardt had been the object of some criticism within the administration because of his handling of the presidential tapes issue.

St. Clair was described by some of his close associates yesterday as a scrupulously thorough pre-trial planner who routinely compiles elaborate trial books before the start of a case and rarely is surprised by courtroom developments.

He is a registered Republican, but he has defended a number of seemingly ideological opposites, including the Rev. William Sloane Coffin Jr., the Yale chaplain who was tried in 1963 for conspiring to violate the Selective Service Act in an antiwar demonstration.

St. Clair also defended a



JAMES D. ST. CLAIR
... methodical lawyer

Harvard University professor accused in 1958 of contempt for refusing to name colleagues who allegedly were Communist sympathizers, and he has been involved for several years in school desegregation cases in Boston.

But his first national exposure as a defense lawyer came in 1954, when he sat alongside Joseph N. Welch in opposition to Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy in Senate subcommittee hearings investigating alleged Communists in the Army.

St. Clair and Welch were partners of the prestigious Boston trial law firm of Hale & Door, and one of the most dramatic moments of the hearings involved another young member of the law firm whom St. Clair chose to work under him during the hearings.

When McCarthy pointed out that the young lawyer, Frederick G. Fisher Jr., had been a member of the National Lawyers Guild—and implied that he was a Communist—Welch replied in a trembling voice, "Until this moment, I think I never really gauged your cruelty or your recklessness."

John G. Adams, the former Army counsel who hired Welch as special counsel, recalled yesterday that St. Clair was "very active from the very beginning to the very end" of the McCarthy hearings.

"Everybody was subordinate to Welch and St. Clair. He (St. Clair) was a first-rate lawyer and a fine tactician," said Adams, now a Washington attorney.

Associates of St. Clair in Boston said that the new Watergate counsel, while not flamboyant in the courtroom,

is methodical in his defense preparation and presentation of evidence. Referring often to his thick trial books during testimony, St. Clair often dazzles the court with his recall of minutiae, one of his associates said.

Because Welch so dominated the public parts of the McCarthy hearings, observers said, St. Clair's role as a tactician was rarely visible. But, as first assistant to Welch, he played a major behind-the-scenes role in the case, they said.

St. Clair normally shuns publicity, and his appointment to the White House staff was characteristically carried off in secrecy. He flew out to San Clemente early this week, White House aides said, and met with Mr. Nixon for the first time. He then returned to Washington and quietly moved into an office in the Executive Office Building.

As special counsel to the President, St. Clair will earn \$42,500 a year, the same amount Garment earned as the highest paid presidential legal adviser.

Before the Watergate disclosures, the President's legal staff consisted of three law-

yers, headed by Dean. In subsequent months, the team grew to include 11 attorneys, costing a reported \$232,000 in salaries, to deal with Watergate.

Repeatedly, White House aides have alluded to the size of the legal staffs of the Senate Watergate committee, with 22 attorneys, and the special prosecutor's office, which has 38 lawyers.

Moreover, House Judiciary Committee Chairman Rep. Peter W. Rodino (D-N.J.) has a staff of 31 at work collecting data for the committees' impeachment inquiry, and Rodino has estimated that the staff will grow to 40 or 50. The House has voted \$1 million to finance the inquiry.

St. Clair, who has been a trial law lecturer at Harvard University Law School since 1955, joined the Hale & Door firm in 1949 and became a senior partner in 1954.

Born in Akron, he received his bachelor's degree in 1941 from the University of Illinois, and was graduated from Harvard Law School in 1947. He served from 1942 to 1945 as an officer in the Navy.

He is married to the former Asenath Nestle. They have three children, and live in

Wellesley, Mass.

As assistant to the President, Garment will be an adviser on a wide range of activities, primarily in domestic affairs, the White House said.

Before his May 10 appointment as acting counsel, Garment advised Mr. Nixon on cultural matters, education and civil rights, among other areas. He is a former member of Mr. Nixon's New York law firm and a long-time campaigner for the President.