

Report of Colson Defending Nixon

Washington

Charles W. Colson yesterday repeatedly insisted that President Nixon is innocent of any of the wrong-doing, according to House Judiciary Committee members who heard him testify at their impeachment inquiry.

The committee had thought the former White House counsel could testify about Watergate, the "Plumbers," ITT and milk money. But even Republicans who called him "highly credible" Monday said he was "slippery" yesterday.

At one point, Representative Tom Railsback (Rep.-Ill.) asked Colson why he pleaded guilty to a charge of obstructing justice and some committee members reported Colson gave an evasive answer.

Colson began a one to three year sentence July 8 for trying to defame Daniel Ellsberg.

Colson testified about a

charge by former White House counsel John Dean III that Mr. Nixon participated in the coverup, and the possibility that Mr. Nixon ordered hush money paid to E. Howard Hunt, one of the Watergate burglars.

In transcripts of a March 21, 1973, conversation, Dean tells Mr. Nixon, "and as you know Colson has talked to, indirectly to Hunt, about commutation."

Representative Charles Wiggins (Rep.-Calif.) said Colson testified "he never had a clemency discussion" with Mr. Nixon about Hunt. "He did not intend and did not in fact give any offer of commutation or leniency to Hunt. He said he would do what he could as a friend for a friend," Wiggins said.

Colson completed 16 hours of testimony in late afternoon and Herbert W. Kalmbach, Mr. Nixon's personal attorney, took the stand as the last witness.

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