

The Nixon men: Why?

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NEW ORLEANS — A type of group pressure called the "risky-shift" often led aides of former President Nixon to acquiesce to questionable conduct, a psychologist said yesterday.

"In the Nixon group, the norm was to be tough and strong, take risks, be uninhibited in dealing with their enemies, the press, the intellectuals," said Bertram Raven of UCLA in an address to the American Psychological Association convention.

"The group pressures on the individual were to adopt a position which was riskier, bolder, stronger, less inhibited than that taken by the other members of the group."

Raven said he based his analysis on testimony before the Senate Watergate committee and on transcripts of taped White House conversations.

Raven noted that former White House counsel John Dean, former Atty. Gen. John Mitchell and aide Jeb Stuart Magruder all expressed profound shock, in



DEAN



MITCHELL



MAGRUDER

"Steadfast, strong, hard-hitting, merciless"

retrospect, at G. Gordon Liddy's plan to use high-paid prostitutes, kidnappings, blackmail and burglaries to help destroy the Democrats.

When Liddy presented his plan, however, "none said anything more than suggesting that that was not exactly what they had in mind," Raven said.

"Why not? One answer might be that Liddy was one of (Charles) Colson's men, the superhard fighter. A strong display of disapproval would have been conveyed as indicating weakness, of not being a good team member," he said.

Presidential adviser John Ehrlichman reacted similarly in 1971, Raven said, when he discovered the White House plumbers had "gone far beyond their basic mission in plugging information leaks. They had burglarized the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist.

"Had Ehrlichman taken a strong position, admonished the 'plumbers,' fired them, and reported them for illegal acts, the entire Watergate scandal might never have occurred," Raven said.

But Ehrlichman "merely indicated that he did not agree with this method of in-

vestigation" and suggested that they not do it again.

Raven, who has written extensively about the dynamics of power, said under unwritten rules of the Nixon group, "One was not to shout and decry strong acts against the enemy — unless you want to be labeled as soft and suffer the inevitable consequences."

Raven said the importance of toughness was apparent to members of the President's circle, from "falling stars" like Daniel Moynihan, who had been "too contemplative and too apologetic for liberal causes," and from the rise of men like Colson, who once said he would "walk over my own grandmother if necessary" to help Nixon's re-election campaign.

"The lessons were clear for all who wished to see: To be a rising member of the (inner circle) you had to be loyal to the chief, steadfast, strong, hard-hitting, merciless to your enemies, and not get wound up worrying too much about the methods that you used."