

Watergate Mastermind Hunt Calls Nixon a 'Lucky Man'

Brookline, Mass.

Watergate mastermind E. Howard Hunt, bitter after 32 months in prison, yesterday called former President Nixon "a very lucky man" because of his pardon by former President Ford.

He said at the time he "applauded" the pardon, thinking one would also be extended to him.

"I have distilled it to this thought. 'Pardon one, pardon all,'" Hunt said when asked if he still approves of the Nixon pardon.

"Yes, I would say that I entertain a pretty good amount of bitterness," Hunt said at his first news conference since being released Wednesday from a federal prison in Florida.

Hunt, 58, said he was misled by the Nixon administration about the legality of the 1972 break-in at Democratic National Headquarters, which he described as "just a continuum of my 21 years as a CIA officer."

"To some extent, yes. I felt that

I was misled in terms of the degree of legality that our operation contained," he said.

Asked by whom he was misled, he singled out Watergate burglar G. Gordon Liddy, former U.S. Attorney General John Mitchell and former Nixon aides John Ehrlichman and John Dean.

"I had thought of (Nixon) as a strong national leader ... but I don't think he was able to conceive of what was happening in realistic terms," Hunt said.

"He (Nixon) is certainly one of those I would hold responsible (for having to serve a prison term). He could have brought the investigation to a halt and Watergate would never have become the horrendous tragedy that it did."

Hunt said he is especially bitter toward U.S. District Judge John Sirica for giving him a prison term of up to eight years.

"I'm bitter I would say against John Sirica for the absolutely un-

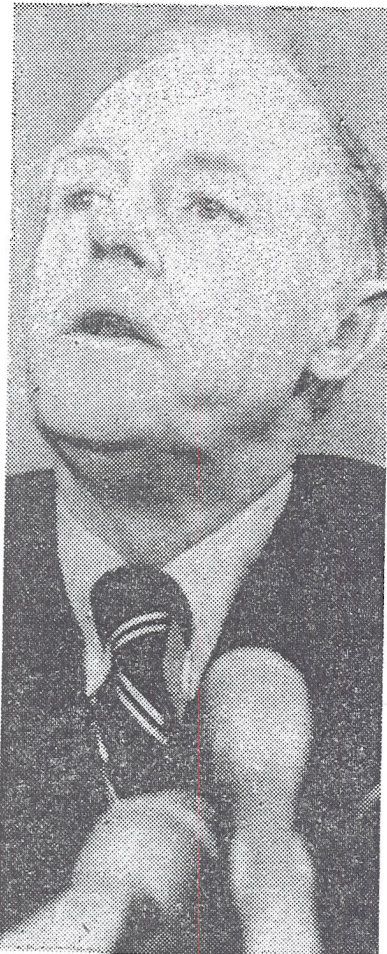
precedented sentence that was handed me," he told reporters at the suburban office of the American Program Bureau, which will act as his agent for a national lecture tour.

The bitterness, he said, also extends to "those White House elements who remained in power after I was in prison and were too busy seeking their own salvation to pay any attention to the plight of those of us who were already broken and in custody.

"Because I've paid my price for Watergate — in sorrow ... wasted years; in tragedy, ridicule and humiliation — I feel no public act of contrition can be required of me," said Hunt.

The U.S. Parole Commission ordered Hunt released. He also paid a \$10,000 fine. He served his time in the federal prison at Elgin Air Force Base in Florida and has 5½ years of parole remaining.

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E. HOWARD HUNT
Paroled