

Ziegler Meets The Press -- Notes from A Briefing

FOLLOWING IS AN EXCERPT from one of White House Press Secretary Ronald Ziegler's daily press briefings. It is not quite typical since it covers the Watergate affair, on which the White House was especially sensitive. But it illustrates the way Ziegler can clam up when he doesn't want to respond to questions.

Q: Ron, the Washington Post this morning published a report saying that Mr. Segretti (Donald H. Segretti who has been accused of directing espionage against Democrats), after he learned that reporters were trying to contact him, made at least two calls to Dwight Chapin here at the White House. In view of the fact that we know that Mr. Chapin's calls are all recorded by the White House, could you find out whether that in fact is true.

Ziegler: Bob (Pierpont of CBS) - I don't have anything further to say on that subject.

Q: Have FBI agents talked Chapin about the role of hiring Segretti?

Ziegler: I don't have anything else to say on that subject.

Q: Why don't you, Ron? You ought to be responsive to the people on that.

Ziegler: I stand by what we have said before and what Mr. Chapin has said. I have nothing further to add.

Q: Why can't you or someone else tell us what Dwight Chapin's relationship with Mr. Segretti is?

Ziegler: I have nothing further to say to you on that subject.

Q: We are not asking you to say anything. We are asking you to check the log. Can you do that?

Ziegler: I don't have anything further to say on that subject beyond what has already been said.

Q: Would you agree that a direct interpretation of your responses over the past several weeks or months to questions on this affair could be described as brazening it out?

Ziegler: I don't believe I would associate myself with that statement.

Q: Is it because you don't think you are supposed to answer those questions?

Ziegler: I have nothing else to say on the subject.

Q: The questions are legitimate aren't they?

Ziegler: It is not my place to reason why.

Q: Ron, are you refusing to obtain information about the telephone log of a public official who is being paid by the public? Is that what you are telling us?

Ziegler: I am saying I have nothing more to say on that subject beyond

what we have said before.

Q: But he is asking you if you will do anything on the subject, not say anything on the subject.

Ziegler: I understand what he is saying, but I stand on my answer.

Q: Would it be possible for us, under present White House operations, to ask the telephone operators and get an answer to Mr. Chapin's calls on these dates?

Ziegler: I don't believe so.

Q: Do you know whether there is a rule at the White House that the operators are not allowed to disclose that information?

Ziegler: I would hope so.

Q: Does the President know that we are asking all these questions and not getting answers? Does he, Ron?

Ziegler: I don't think I have anything further to say. Are there any further questions?

Q: Does the President read the transcripts?

Ziegler: He reads the news reports. We will brief again this afternoon at three.

ROBERT S. BOYD