

'Unethical Conduct' Link to Nixon Aide



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WHITE HOUSE counsel John Wesley Dean III, who prepares all President Nixon's legal opinions, was fired from his first law job for "unethical conduct."

Civil Service Commission files contain a form, dated August 30, 1967, and marked "Inquiry For United States Government Use Only," which gives a report on Dean's dismissal from the prestigious Washington law firm of Welch and Morgan.

The form is signed by Vincent B. Welch, senior partner. Under "reason for discharge or resignation," Welch wrote: "Unethical conduct." Asked to "please explain fully," he added: "While employed by this firm, applicant undertook work unbeknownst to us at the time, in direct conflict with the interest of the firm and a client thereof."

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DEAN has provided the legal support for President Nixon's battles with Congress, including the blanket claim of executive privilege, the broad use of the pocket veto and the impoundment of appropriated funds.

The President also assigned Dean to investigate the Watergate mess, although Dean personally had brought one of the Watergate ringleaders, G. Gordon Liddy, into the White House. Not surprisingly, Dean produced a whitewash report exonerating all present White House employees.

Dean was fired from the Welch and Morgan firm, according to the Civil Service files, on February 4, 1966. He wangled a political appointment as minority counsel to the House Judiciary Committee. The following year, Dean was appointed

associate director of the National Commission on Reform of Criminal Laws.

Among his duties, he directed a study of "conflict of interest" — the very offense that brought his discharge from the Welch and Morgan firm. A spokesman for the firm refused to confirm or deny that Dean had been fired.

However, attorneys formerly associated with the firm told us Dean was kicked out of the office after he was caught in a conflict over a St. Louis television application.

According to one source, Dean had been assigned by the firm to prepare an application for a television license for the Continental Summit Television Corp. At the same time, he allegedly filed a secret, rival application for himself and some friends.

We checked the files at the Federal Communications Commission and found, curiously, that the paperwork handled by Dean is missing from the file. Of course, this may be inadvertent.

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INCREASINGLY, however, the embattled Dean appears to be a weak pillar for the President to rest his bold legal doctrines on. Yet only last week, the President phoned Dean from Key Biscayne, Fla., to express his full support.

Footnote: Civil Service Commission files show that two-and-a-half years later, Welch watered down the unethical conduct charge. Former firm members say Welch wrote the letter after an appeal from Dean's political friends. The files show he wrote a letter, dated October 29, 1968, to the Civil Service Commission declaring the unethical conduct charge "may have been an overstatement."