

McCord Plans News Conference to Break His Public Silence on Watergate Plot

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WASHINGTON, April 5 —

James W. McCord Jr., who has refused for nine months to talk to reporters about the Watergate conspiracy, said today that he would hold a news conference on the subject in the next few days.

His attorney, Bernard Fensterwald of Washington, said that McCord would talk about everything except the "one small area" of his knowledge that he had discussed at a closed hearing of the select Senate committee investigating the Watergate plot.

The motives behind McCord's abrupt decision to answer questions publicly were unclear, and the prospect was understood to have caused immediate concern among Senate investigators who want to interrogate him further.

McCord appeared at the United States Courthouse this morning to testify before a Federal grand jury. He was granted immunity from further prosecution in the case by Chief Judge John J. Sirica of the United States District Court.

The convicted conspirator broke his silence to tell newsmen the "story should be told" about the plot to spy on the Democrats in the Presidential campaign last year.

Grand Jury Inquiry

Mr. Fensterwald said that McCord planned to hold his news conference after completing his testimony in the grand jury room and in a closed pre-trial proceeding related to civil lawsuits pending in the case.

McCord's deposition in the civil litigation, which began yesterday, is to be resumed a day after his grand jury appearance is over and, Mr. Fensterwald said, can probably be finished by early next week.

The lawyer, who entered the case after McCord's conviction in January for conspiracy, burglary and eavesdropping, said that his client would answer questions except in a limited area covered in the four-and-a-half-hour hearing last week before the Select Senate Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities.

"The Senate select committee covered only one small area of his knowledge" said Mr. Fensterwald, who added that he could not help it if the committee was displeased with the idea of a news conference. The committee has said that its staff needs to interview McCord before public hearings can be held.

Eager to Testify

In a letter to Judge Sirica two weeks ago, McCord alleged that "others" besides the seven

men who were convicted on had pleaded guilty had been involved in the wiretapping of telephones in the offices of the Democratic National Committee at the Watergate complex. He suggested that he was ready to name them.

His eagerness to do so became apparent when it was announced that he approached Samuel Dash, chief counsel to the Senate committee, within hours after his letter to the judge was disclosed.

In disclosing two long interviews had taken place in which McCord was said to have named names, Mr. Dash made it clear that the convicted conspirator wanted his cooperation made public.

It was generally assumed that this desire had been voiced to make certain that McCord's testimony to the committee became known to Judge Sirica. The judge had said that he would consider such cooperation in imposing sentence on the convicted men.

The judge made it apparent last Friday that he was informed of McCord's activity, and he postponed sentencing until June 15 to give the convicted man further opportunities to talk.

McCord has indicated that he is prepared to appear before the Senate committee in public session, but the panel began to show caution after parts of the witness's testimony leaked out of the closed hearing last week.

The committee chairman, Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr., Democrat of North Carolina, said Tuesday that the staff would "proceed to conduct a thorough investigation of the information asserted" by McCord before he goes on the witness stand in public.

Mr. Fensterwald appeared dissatisfied with the delay. He told reporters at the courthouse today that he thought it "would be good if he [McCord] got back before the Senate committee."

Asked why McCord wanted to hold a news conference promptly, the lawyer said only that he "just thought you fellows might welcome the opportunity to ask him some questions."

"He can do anything he wants to do," a committee informant said later. "We have no control over him if he decides he wants to run his own public session."

Committee sources suggested, however, that dealing with the sensitive political case in a news conference might hurt McCord's credibility as a witness and that disclosure of new information could hamper subsequent investigation.

One source said that the committee would report to Judge Sirica on McCord's cooperation

with it, and the source remarked that the panel would have to consider the effect of a news conference upon its investigation.

In another development today, Ronald L. Ziegler, the White House press secretary, said that President Nixon "has confidence" in John W. Dean 3d, counsel to the President.

Jack Anderson, the syndicated columnist, said in a report published today that Mr. Dean had been discharged from his first job with a Washington law firm because of what was first described as "unethical conduct" but was later softened to a "basic disagreement" over policy.

The Anderson article "does not deter" the President's confidence in Mr. Dean, Mr. Ziegler said. The law firm that modified its initial charge was made up of "very distinguished people," he added, saying that their later assessment should be considered.