

Mitchell Now Says He Heard Bugging Plot at Three Meetings in 1972, But Rejected It

DEAN IS REBUKED

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Ziegler Disputes His Statement on Trying to Find Scapegoat

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WASHINGTON, April 19 —

The White House abandoned today all show of support for the embattled Presidential counsel, John W. Dean 3d, who has been accused of complicity in the Watergate case.

Mr. Dean, a 34-year-old lawyer who conducted the investigation on which President Nixon based his original denials of White House involvement in the break-in, issued a statement this morning declaring that no one would succeed in making him "a scapegoat."

Mr. Dean, heretofore considered one of the staunchest "team players" in the Administration, bypassed the White House chain of command in issuing the statement, notifying neither Mr. Nixon nor the press office in advance. Instead, his secretary, her voice trembling, phoned it to newspaper offices.

Ziegler Rebukes Dean

Ronald L. Ziegler, the White House press secretary, appeared for the regular morning news briefing about an hour later and reiterated his statement of yesterday that he would answer no questions whatever about the Watergate episode.

Then, in response to the first question, he rebuked Mr. Dean, declaring that Mr. Nixon's statement on Tuesday "made it quite clear that the process now under way is not one to find scapegoats but one to get at the truth."

In a major reversal of his previous position, Mr. Nixon said on Tuesday that he would permit his aides to testify before a Senate committee investigating the bugging of Democratic National Committee headquarters last June and that he had ordered that no major Administration official be given immunity from prosecution.

No New Backing Given

Mr. Dean's stock began to drop immediately after the President's statement, when Mr. Ziegler refused to repeat earlier expressions of Mr. Nixon's support for the counsel. Furthermore, the President had made it clear that Mr. Dean was involved in neither the latest investigation of the case nor in negotiations with the Senate committee over new ground rules.

In response to a barrage of further questions today, Mr. Ziegler expressed no enthusiasm for him at all.

Had Mr. Dean been fired? No. Had he resigned? No. Was he in his office today? Yes. When had the President last talked to Mr. Dean on the phone? I don't know.

At one point, Mr. Ziegler was

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asked just what Mr. Dean was doing these days.

"He's in his office," he replied. "I don't know what he's doing. Attending to business, I assume" — here he chuckled audibly — "business of some sort."

Finally, he was asked whether Mr. Dean was still a functioning member of the staff, whether he was still trusted, whether he was still given responsible tasks. Mr. Ziegler replied that he could say only that Mr. Dean had not resigned or been dismissed.

Isolated, Cut Off

Another White House staff member said, "John has been isolated, cut off."

The mood at the White House, insofar as it could be established from the few junior aides willing to talk, was one of apprehension. One aide said he was trying to work, "but most people seem to be running around in a state of panic."

Mr. Ziegler was good-natured during the briefing, and even said he loved his job. But he seemed to betray nervousness when he "misspoke" himself, to use his phrase, three times in a single sentence when discussing Mr. Nixon's conference with a group of Jewish leaders.

Asked why Mr. Dean had been treated as he had, one Administration official, not in the White House, suggested that the Nixon inner circle felt betrayed by what he called Mr. Dean's "inadequate" initial investigation, conducted last summer.

Mr. Ziegler confirmed today that Mr. Dean had never submitted a written report. He said that he did not know whether the oral report was

delivered directly to Mr. Nixon or through an intermediary.

Named by Magruder

Mr. Dean was named by Jeb Stuart Magruder in conversations with Federal prosecutors on Saturday as one of the participants in a meeting in February, 1972, in which the Watergate bugging and a political espionage campaign were planned.

Early this week, Mr. Dean hired a new lawyer, Robert C. McCandless, an Oklahoma Democrat who ran Senator Hubert H. Humphrey's field organization in the 1968 Presidential campaign. Mr. Dean and Mr. McCandless married, and subsequently divorced, daughters of the late Senator Thomas C. Hennings of Missouri, but remained close.

Mr. Dean has told friends in the last two days that he is ready to implicate other White House aides in testimony to the grand jury, and his reference in his statement to his determination to avoid being a scapegoat bore this out.

One friend acknowledged today that Mr. Dean's status was awkward, but commented, "He's still counsel to the President. They haven't taken away his desk or anything."

Mr. Dean's statement in full was as follows:

"To date I have refrained from making any public comment whatsoever about the Watergate case. I shall continue that policy in the future because I believe that the case will be fully and justly handled by the grand jury and by the Ervin select committee.

"It is my hope, however, that those truly interested in seeing that the Watergate case is completely aired and that justice will be done will be careful

in drawing any conclusions as to the guilt or involvement of any persons until all the facts are known and until each person has had an opportunity to testify under oath in his own behalf.

"Finally, some may hope or think that I will become a scapegoat in the Watergate case. Anyone who believes this does not know me, know the true facts, nor understand our system of justice."

Mr. Ziegler could shed no light on who the "some" to whom Mr. Dean referred might be. Mr. Dean was unavailable.



Senator Lowell P. Weicker Jr. tells of discovery that locked cabinet in his office was opened.



Associated Press

Bill Wickens, aide to Mr. Weicker, shows the cabinet that was found opened. Mr. Weicker, a member of panel investigating the Watergate case, could not be certain immediately whether papers on the inquiry were missing.