

Krogh, Segretti: Two more for the pressure cooker

John Dean Points a Finger

The torrent of Watergate disclosures last week left no remaining doubt that there had been widespread shady activities—and a massive cover-up—at the topmost levels of the White House. By the weekend only one major question was still to be answered—whether Richard Nixon himself could remain clear of political and moral involvement. And John Wesley Dean III, the boyish, 34-year-old White House counsel who was fired by the President last week, was preparing to associate Mr. Nixon with the cover-up.

Mr. Nixon had cast his lot with John Ehrlichman and H.R. Haldeman, the White House palace guards who were sacrificed (however euphemistically) at the same time as Dean but still stood ready to challenge his story with whatever credibility they had left. But nearly a score of other Nixonians, past or present—including former Attorney General John N. Mitchell and such Administration figures as Jeb Stuart Magruder, Charles W. Colson, Herbert (Bart) Porter, Frederick C. LaRue, Dwight L. Chapin, Gordon Strachan and Robert C. Mardian—were dangling from the grand jury's fingertips, and the predictable orgy of intramural accusation among the Nixon team had broken out into the open. Last week, two more names were added: White House aide Egil (Bud) Krogh Jr., who admitted ordering the burglary of the office of the psychiatrist of Pentagon papers defendant Daniel Ellsberg, and California lawyer Donald Segretti, who was indicted and arrested for alleged violations of campaign law.

In the end, the President's fate might well depend on how many of these increasingly frightened men might join Dean in linking him to the conspiracy—and whether their testimony would out-

weigh Haldeman's and Ehrlichman's. But for the moment, the story that mattered most was Dean's. As NEWSWEEK's Nicholas Horrock and John Lindsay pieced it together, it was a self-serving tale, tailored to give Dean minimum exposure to criminal charges and maximum leverage in his haggling for immunity from prosecution. In Key Biscayne, a high Administration official heatedly denied its key accusations. But Dean seemed determined to press them, and they were explosive.

'This Incredible Stuff'

Dean first heard about the break-in, he told investigators, as he completed a wearying journey back to the U.S. from Manila on June 18, 1972, the day after the burglary. He called Washington to report that he would lay over in San Francisco for the night, but when they told him of the Watergate arrests he hopped the next plane east. Dean had not known of the break-in and bugging scheme, he said, but on the long flight to Washington he recalled some incidents that seemed disturbingly pertinent—especially two meetings in Mitchell's office in which political espionage had been discussed. One of these meetings was the now-famous presentation session in which G. Gordon Liddy flipped through a series of specially prepared charts as he outlined his plans for the 1972 campaign. "Dean sat there in shocked silence," according to a source, "while Liddy was talking about mugging, bugging, kidnaping and even a prostitution squad." After a second meeting, Dean said, he protested to Haldeman, "This incredible stuff shouldn't even be discussed in the Attorney General's office." Haldeman reportedly agreed.

This was the last time the Watergate

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plans had been mentioned in his hearing prior to his phone call from San Francisco, Dean insisted. But when he walked back into the White House, the place was bustling. Dean said Gordon Strachan, a Haldeman lieutenant, told him that there had been wiretap logs in Haldeman's office that Strachan, under orders from Haldeman, had sifted from the files and immediately destroyed. In another meeting in Ehrlichman's office, Ehrlichman and Chuck Colson agreed to have the safe in E. Howard Hunt's office opened in the Executive Office Building. The contents were brought to Dean's office the following morning, two and a half days after the break-in.

Dean went through the contents of Hunt's safe with his assistant, Fred Field-

As Dean told his story to investigators last week, however, it differed in one vitally important detail from earlier versions: he said he was never asked for any report or investigation of White House involvement in the Watergate break-in, by either Mr. Nixon or anyone representing him. Indeed, Dean claims to have set eyes on the President only once between the time of the break-in and Aug. 29, when Mr. Nixon announced publicly that the White House counsel had assured him that no one "presently employed by this Administration" had been involved in Watergate. That one meeting was on Aug. 14 with about twenty other people present, Dean said, and the first he heard of his own supposed report was in a news broadcast on Aug.

talked with Liddy about the break-in two days after it occurred. Liddy told him then that Magruder had "pushed me and pushed me" to make the second Watergate raid. "We had been in the Watergate before, but they wanted us to go back," Dean quoted Liddy.

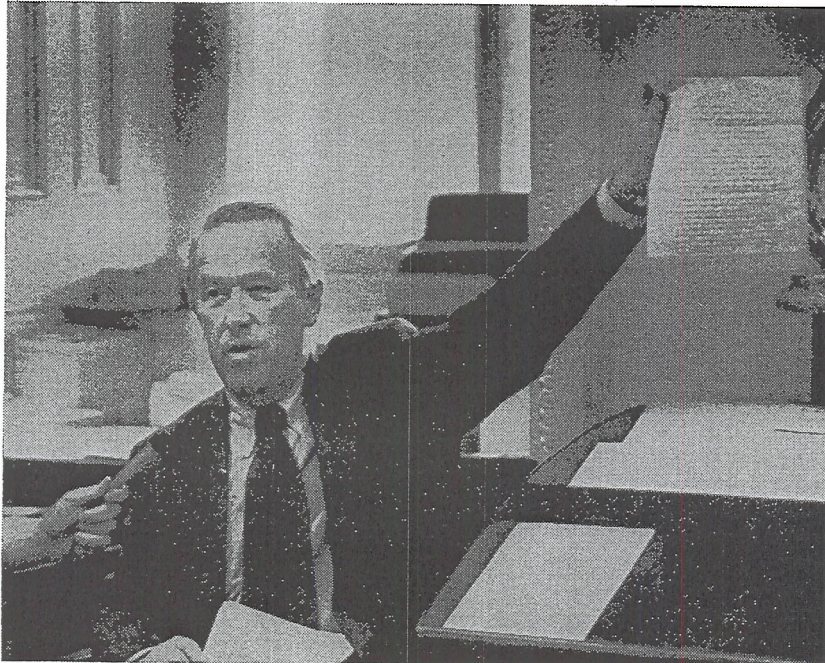
Months later, after the December plane crash that killed Hunt's wife as she carried \$10,000 in \$100 bills to an unknown rendezvous in Chicago, Dean's connection with the cover-up became more intimate. Hunt, unnerved by his wife's death, sent his lawyer, William Bittman, to Chuck Colson with the message that "something had to be done" to prevent a long jail sentence for Hunt. Colson met with Ehrlichman and Dean, the counsel told investigators, and Ehrlichman said, "I'll check." He went in to see the President. When Ehrlichman returned, Dean said, he brought with him what he said was Mr. Nixon's promise of executive clemency for Hunt. Ehrlichman allegedly told Colson to reassure Bittman that "everything is okay," but not to be "too specific."

'If I Go, They Go'

Sometime this spring—perhaps because the investigation was beginning to focus on Dean—the counsel lost his "good boy" status in upper White House circles and came under pressure from Haldeman, Ehrlichman and the President to resign. Mr. Nixon summoned Dean into the Oval Office, Dean told investigators, and pushed a document—a resignation that was a virtual confession—across his desk to Dean. "This has been prepared for your signature," the President reportedly said. Dean refused to sign, he said, because there was no provision for Haldeman's and Ehrlichman's departure—and Dean had resolved that "If I go, they go." After another discordant meeting with Mr. Nixon, Dean said he came under increasing pressure from Ehrlichman and Haldeman to resign, and eventually they suggested he take a weekend at Camp David to "do some thinking." In earlier accounts, this was the weekend in which Dean was supposedly asked to submit a written version of his earlier verbal "report" absolving the White House staff of any complicity in Watergate, but Dean said last week that all he was really asked for was his resignation.

Dean said he refused to submit it, and he went to see the President again on March 21—the date on which, as the President later asserted, he first learned that his staff may have been deceiving him. "Nobody seems to understand that my resigning is not the problem," Dean assertedly told Mr. Nixon. "The problem is that there is a massive cancer on the Presidency and it must be cut out." He thereupon spelled out the story of the Watergate cover-up, including details of the effort to hush it up by paying off those who had been indicted the previous September.

Dean also bore down hard, he said, on the fact that there had never been



Larry Morris—Washington Post

Jackson and fake letter: Sex and the candidates

ing. They found a pistol, electronic bugging equipment, a psychiatric profile on Daniel Ellsberg and the phony cables tying the death of former South Vietnam President Ngo Dinh Diem to President John Kennedy. Dean's reaction, as he told friends, was, "Holy s----!"

'Good Job, John'

Dean said he reported that same morning to Ehrlichman, and it was at this point that Ehrlichman made the suggestion that Dean dump it all in the Potomac on his way home to Alexandria, Va. Dean said he told Fielding later, "They want me to destroy this stuff," but both men agreed the move would be unwise. Dean instead gave most of the material to the FBI; the fake JFK cables were given in two folders to acting FBI director L. Patrick Gray III in the celebrated meeting in which Dean suggested to Gray that the documents "should never see the light of day." As Gray later testified, he put the incriminating papers in the FBI "burn bag" a few days later.

29 when he was in California with the Presidential party.

Dean said he did not see Mr. Nixon personally until several days after the indictment of the Watergate Seven on Sept. 15, when he said Haldeman summoned him into the President's office. The two leaders "were all grins," Dean told investigators, because they had half expected Jeb Magruder to be indicted and were pleased that he hadn't been—presumably because of Dean's efforts "to keep the lid on." "Good job, John," Dean says the President told him. "Bob told me what a great job you've been doing."

Dean did not try to absolve himself of all connections with the Watergate, according to investigators. The lawyer has acknowledged his role in the White House cover-up and admitted that he was involved in obtaining legal help for the Watergate defendants—though he said that the hush-money payments were made by Fred LaRue, Mitchell's assistant at the Committee for the Re-election of the President. Dean also said he

any study clearing White House staffers. Mr. Nixon replied that he had had verbal reports of Dean's work, but the counsel insisted. "Nobody asked me for a report, Mr. President," he said. "I did not go around asking people questions in their offices. There was no report." At this point, sources quoted Dean as saying that "the President came out of his chair" into a half crouch of astonishment and shock. In Dean's account, he reminded Mr. Nixon that the President had gone on national TV to absolve his staff on the basis of the nonexistent report—and whatever Mr. Nixon may have been thinking, the exchange ended the demands for Dean's immediate departure from the White House entourage.

What finally broke the White House silence was not Dean's doing so much as Pat Gray's. After the former acting director of the FBI disclosed in Senate confirmation hearings last March that Dean had "probably" lied to agents during the early investigation, Dean sent an emissary to Federal prosecutors with information implicating Magruder, Ehrlichman, Haldeman and Dean himself—the details to be forthcoming, the emissary said, in exchange for a promise of immunity. Without making any deal, the prosecutors began following up leads given them by the emissary. About ten days later, on April 13, Jeb Magruder got wind that he had been implicated and asked to see the prosecutors, telling them a story that pointed the heaviest finger at John Mitchell.

'People Are Going to Jail'

A day after that, NEWSWEEK has learned, Magruder bumped into Bart Porter in Lafayette Park, across from the White House. "It's all over," the distraught Magruder reportedly said. "I just came from the White House. The President has directed everyone to tell the truth." Magruder said he had just confessed everything to Assistant U.S. Attorney Earl Silbert. "A lot of people are going to jail," Magruder told Porter. "Mitchell, LaRue, Mardian, myself, Dean, Colson, Strachan and maybe Haldeman. Silbert may indict you."

From that point onward, the case gathered steam on all fronts—including the White House, where Mr. Nixon was trying to resolve the showdown between Dean and the Haldeman-Ehrlichman group. On the face of it, there wasn't much of a contest. Dean was a Mitchell assistant brought into the Justice Department in 1969 after having been fired from his only job in private law for "unethical conduct" (he was accused by a senior partner of having promoted his own name rather than his client's in a contest over a St. Louis broadcasting license). Haldeman, on the other hand, was a Nixon loyalist of seventeen years' standing and Ehrlichman had been on board for fourteen years.

Was Mr. Nixon looking for a way to keep Haldeman and Ehrlichman while getting rid of Dean? According to NEWS-

WEEK's sources, the White House counsel made that impossible when he told prosecutors three weeks ago that Ehrlichman knew about the burglary of Ellsberg's psychiatrist. Dean's main motive, according to associates, was to establish his own credibility with Federal and Senate investigators, but it may not have done him much good. "If we need his testimony," said a prosecution source last week, "we'll have to give him immunity. If we don't, we'll just hang the son of a bitch."

The Administration's housecleaning may have been the shocker of the week, but it hardly stoppered the flood of other Watergate-related developments, great and small. Haldeman and Ehrlichman spent two days with the grand



Martha Mitchell: CRP's 'creeps'

jury and Ervin's committee. Martha Mitchell, wearing baby blue, appeared at a lawyer's office in New York to give a deposition in connection with the Democratic Party's \$6.4 million civil-damage suit against several principals in the Watergate case. Her rambling, two-hour statement, attorneys said later, was "amusing" and dealt mostly with the "creeps" and "kooks" from CRP who guarded her during the campaign.

Another famous relative, Mr. Nixon's 26-year-old nephew Donald—or someone who looked very much like him—appeared before a New York grand jury investigating Robert L. Vesco, the financier who shuffled \$200,000 in secret cash to the Nixon campaign chest three days after a law went into effect requiring disclosure of such gifts. Young Nixon

has worked as an assistant to Vesco since 1971 and describes the financier as his "best friend." Vesco himself reportedly sat out the week in Costa Rica, refusing to honor a bench warrant except in exchange for immunity. And the Justice Department responding to a sharply worded prod from the General Accounting Office, finally filed suit against CRP's financial arm because of the same Vesco contribution.

Two pieces of dirty work laid to CRP's espionage team moved a little closer to prosecution last week. Donald Segretti, the California lawyer hired as a trickster by former Haldeman assistant Dwight L. Chapin, was indicted on charges of trying to sabotage last year's Florida Democratic primary—allegedly by sending out campaign literature, attributed to Sen. Edmund Muskie, in which two rival Democrats were accused of sexual peccadilloes (the tales: that Sen Hubert Humphrey had been caught with a prostitute in his car in 1967 and that Sen. Henry M. Jackson had twice been arrested for homosexual activities in the 1950s).

Rx for a Burglary

Across the country, meanwhile, defense lawyers in the Ellsberg trial were permitted to introduce testimony from the Washington grand jury disclosing that Howard Hunt and Gordon Liddy had been ordered to break into Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office by Bud Krogh—at the time an Ehrlichman protégé in the White House and more recently a Department of Transportation Under Secretary. Krogh abruptly left, and was reported to have begun singing to Federal prosecutors in Washington.

But the most dramatic late-week revelation belonged, fittingly enough, to John Dean. Four days after being fired by Mr. Nixon, Dean disclosed that he had removed nine classified documents related to Watergate from his White House office prior to his departure. In papers filed with the U.S. district court in Washington, Dean asked Judge John J. Sirica to take custody of two keys to a safe-deposit box in Alexandria, Va., where the papers are stored. Just before that maneuver, the White House had rushed forth a ruling that all classified material was barred from disclosure by security laws—but whether this would be enough to top Dean's latest ploy is an open question.

For all the cascade of new information, the week's events left Federal prosecutors in a curious state of gloom about their ultimate chances of tracking the Watergate case to its last White House cranny. "When these people make statements under oath and they lie," said a prosecutor, "what the hell can you do? You can't go into the Prime Minister's office anywhere in the world and look at his files and slap handcuffs on his people. If you think government works that way, you're crazy. Maybe what I'm saying is that there are some things beyond redress."