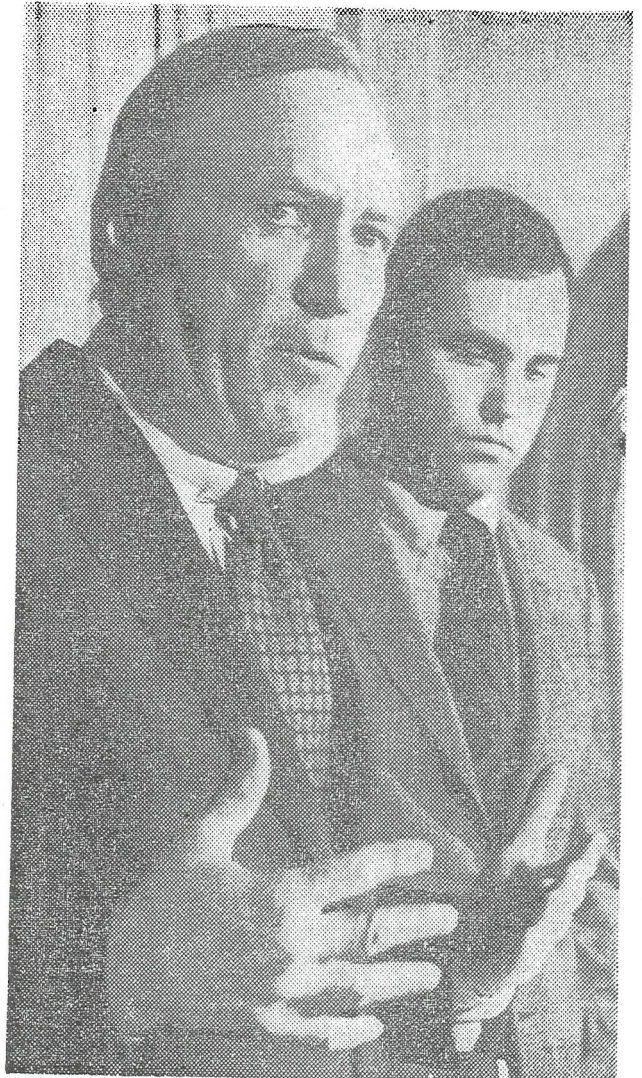


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Leonard Garment, recently appointed counsel to President Nixon, with Ronald L. Ziegler, Presidential press secretary, as he briefed reporters on White House proposals for changes in the nation's election laws.

## White House Concedes Dean Report

By R. W. APPLE Jr.

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 16—The White House conceded today that President Nixon had not talked directly with his former counsel, John W. Dean 3d, in ordering him to investigate the Watergate case and in receiving a report on the inquiry.

Instead, said the Presidential press secretary, Ronald L. Ziegler, Mr. Nixon passed messages to and received assurances from Mr. Dean through "senior staff members."

Mr. Ziegler confirmed an article in The New York Times today identifying John D. Ehrlichman, who recently resigned as the President's chief domestic adviser, as the conduit for Mr. Nixon's communications with Mr. Dean. The article also reported, and Mr. Ziegler affirmed, that Mr. Nixon had received only an oral report.

The press secretary suggested that other senior staff members may also have been involved in conveying assurances to the President. Informed White House sources, however, left no doubt that Mr. Ehrlichman had been the key operative.

Mr. Ziegler insisted that an investigation had, in fact, been carried out and that Mr. Dean "was clearly in charge" of it. However, Mr. Ziegler said, "there was a certain inadequacy" in the information Mr. Dean provided on the investigation.

Mr. Dean, who was dis-

charged by the President last month, said last week that there had been an effort to discredit him personally so as to undercut the testimony he is expected to give to the Senate hearings on the case that open tomorrow. Earlier, he had vowed not to become a "scapegoat."

The President relied upon the Dean investigation for his assertion, at an Aug. 29 news conference, that no White House aides had been involved in the Watergate break-in.

In another Watergate development, the President sent to Congress this morning a proposal for a bipartisan commission to recommend sweeping Federal election reforms. He cited "widespread abuses during the Presidential campaign of 1972."

### Comment on Inconsistency

Mr. Nixon's new counsel, Leonard Garment, said in briefing the press on the proposal that it did not constitute an attempt by the Administration to suggest that institutions, rather than individuals, had been responsible for the Watergate scandal. Instead, he said, it represented an attempt to capitalize on "the rather unique opportunity" for reform pre-

sented by the Watergate revelations.

The President delayed signing a campaign finance bill in 1972 for more than two weeks, giving his fund raisers an opportunity to collect vast sums from anonymous donors. He opposed an absolute limit on the size of contributions. And he vetoed another reform measure passed by Congress in 1970.

Asked to explain the inconsistency, Mr. Garment replied: "Conditions do alter circumstances."

Mr. Nixon's proposal calls for the establishment of a 17-member bipartisan committee that would conduct a broad election-practices study and make specific legislative recommendations, Mr. Garment said.

"Nothing would be excluded" the President said in a special message to Congress.

Senator Mike Mansfield of Montana, the Democratic leader, called the commission proposal "a step in the right direction." He joined the Senate Republican leadership in introducing the measure to create the commission. But the House Speaker, Representative Carl Albert, Democrat of Oklahoma, said he had not evaluated the proposal.