

Nixon Aide Disputes Dean On What President Knew

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By WALTER RUGABER JUL 13 1973

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WASHINGTON, July 12 — A White House official contradicted before the Senate Watergate committee today charges by John W. Dean 3d that President Nixon knew of efforts to cover up the scandal as early as last September.

The official, Richard A. Moore, testified that, in fact, Mr. Dean, the discharged White

Mitchell excerpts on Page 14;
Moore statement, Page 15.

House counsel, informed him on March 20 that he had not informed the President of the cover-up and that he did not think that anyone else had done so.

Mr. Dean, in five days of testimony before the Senate panel last month, said he felt that Mr. Nixon indicated an awareness on Sept. 15 that White House advisers and campaign organization officials were involved in the scandal.

Mr. Dean, who was dismissed by the President on April 30, told the committee that aspects of the cover-up activity also arose in conver-

sations with Mr. Nixon last February and March.

Mr. Moore, who has been a special counsel to the President since 1971 and with whom Mr. Dean said he had discussed many of the Watergate issues, gave a broadly different statement.

"Nothing said in my meetings with Mr. Dean or my meetings with the President suggests in any way that before March 21 the President had known, or that Mr. Dean believed he had known, of any involvement of White House personnel in the bugging or the cover-up," Mr. Moore said.

The White House lawyer came to the witness table after the committee concluded its examination of John N. Mitchell with an aggressive challenge to his credibility as a witness in the defense of the President.

Mr. Moore, who is scheduled to return to the hearing room for further questioning tomorrow, also underwent close interrogation after reading a 20-page opening statement.

An assistant counsel to the

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committee, Terry F. Lenzner, asked Mr. Moore about a long series of meetings in February and March in which various Administration officials participated.

The White House special counsel, fumbling with papers and occasionally flashing an embarrassed smile, said frequently that he could not remember the names of those present or of the subject matter that had been discussed.

Meetings Described

The significance of sessions before March 21 is based on the President's statement that on that date he learned for the first time of "serious charges" about the Watergate affair and began an investigation of them.

Mr. Moore, a 59-year-old Albany native who described himself as "a source of white-haired advice and experience whenever the President of the younger men seek my help," said he had urged Mr. Dean to tell Mr. Nixon "everything" on March 21.

The lawyer discussed a March 14 meeting with the President, Mr. Dean and Ronald L. Ziegler, the White House press secretary, and subsequent sessions of March 15, 19 and 20 at which only Mr. Nixon, Mr. Dean and Mr. Moore were present.

"At no time did anyone say anything in my presence which related to or suggested the existence of any cover-up, or any knowledge or involvement by anyone in the White House, then or now, in the Watergate affair," Mr. Moore declared.

At the March 20 meeting, he went on, "It seemed crystal clear to me" the President knew nothing "inconsistent with the previously stated con-

clusion that the White House was uninvolved."

When that meeting with the President was over, Mr. Moore testified, he decided to bring up with Mr. Dean the "things that Dean was worried about or had been hinting at to me." The witness continued:

"I said that I had the feeling that the President had no knowledge of the things that were worrying Dean. I asked Dean whether he had ever told the President about them. Dean replied that he had not, and I asked whether anyone else had. Dean said he didn't think so."

At that, Mr. Moore said, he suggested to Mr. Dean that he "go in and tell him what you know, you will feel better, it will be right for him and it will be good for the country."

Mr. Dean took the advice, the witness testified, and afterward informed Mr. Moore that "he told the President everything" and that the President had been "surprised."

In an extended verbal duel earlier with the committee's chief counsel, Samuel Dash, Mr. Mitchell acknowledged that some of his hearings differed from his prior statements.

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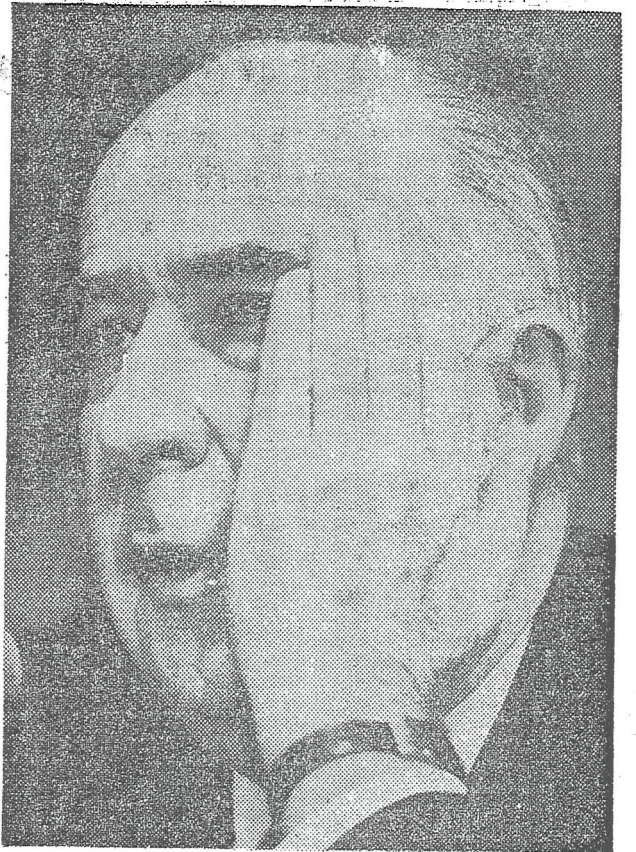
Distinction Sought

The answer to one question posed under oath last fall had been "equivocal," Mr. Mitchell said. On another point, he said, his memory had "failed." And, he said, he had not been "volunteering" information.

"Is there a distinction between your not volunteering anything and lying?" Mr. Dash asked.

"I think we would have to find out what the specifics are," Mr. Mitchell replied.

"Since you may have given false testimony under oath on



United Press International

Former Attorney General John N. Mitchell testifying at Senate Watergate hearing yesterday.

prior occasions," Mr. Dash demanded near the end of his interrogation, "is there really any reason for this committee to believe your testimony before this committee?"

That barbed inquiry was aimed not only at Mr. Mitchell but also at the President. A chief feature of this week's testimony by Mr. Nixon's one-time campaign manager was his persistent denial of Presidential involvement in the Watergate scandal or its cover-up.

Specifically, Mr. Dash asked, should the former Attorney General be believed on the question of whether he had any knowledge about the President's knowledge of the cover-up or participation in the cover-up?"

Other Testimony Noted

After the arrest of five men inside the Watergate offices of the Democratic National Committee, a number of Administration figures sought to mask responsibility for the plot to spy on the opposition through wiretaps on telephones at the party headquarters.

Also at issue, Mr. Dash declared, is whether Mr. Mitchell should be believed when he denies approving the wiretaps and when he denies "any active part in the cover-up himself and in the payment of hush money to the men captured."

"I disagree, of course, with your interpretation of the matters that you have just read [the comparison of earlier statements with those made this week]," the former Attorney General replied.

"As far as the determinations of this committee [on his credibility]," Mr. Mitchell continued, "I think they can judge . . . my testimony and make their own conclusions after my appearance here."

In response, Mr. Dash noted that in order to believe Mr. Mitchell it would be necessary to disbelieve such other key witnesses as James W. McCord Jr., one of the convicted Watergate conspirators; Jeb Stuart Magruder former deputy director for the Nixon campaign, and "in some respects" Mr. Dean.

The principal weapons in Mr. Dash assault on the former Attorney General's credibility were reports of statements to investigators and the transcript

of a pretrial statement in a civil litigation growing out of the Watergate case.

Mr. Dash declared that during Mr. Mitchell's Senate appearance he testified that an aide, Robert C. Mardian, had briefed him on June 21 or 22, 1972, about "all the information" obtained from G. Gordon Liddy, another of the conspirators.

Mr. Dash quoted this exchange from the deposition, given on Sept. 5.