

Haldeman Denials Contradict Witnesses

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WASHINGTON, July 12—H. R. Haldeman, President Nixon's former chief of staff, has told Senate investigators that he took no part in planning the Watergate burglary and did not know of efforts to block the investigation and cover up the facts until March this year.

Mr. Haldeman's statements, in an interview with the staff of the Senate Watergate com-

mittee on May 4, contradict the sworn testimony of other witnesses, including John W. Dean 3d, the former White House counsel; Jeb Stuart Magruder, once the deputy campaign director, and John N. Mitchell, former Attorney General.

A 20-page report of the Haldeman interview that was prepared afterward by the committee's staff has been obtained by The New York Times.

Mr. Haldeman has also denied any involvement in the

over-all Watergate affair in public statements, in a civil deposition and in testimony given privately to a Senate subcommittee.

Nonetheless, Federal prosecutors are known to believe that the former advertising executive, who was the President's closest adviser until he resigned April 30 in the wake of Watergate disclosures, played a major role in the cover-up of the scandal.

The prosecutors are said to believe that Mr. Haldeman did so for two reasons: to protect the President's political position in the months before the 1972 election, and to prevent other illicit White House activities, such as the "plumbers" operations, from coming to light.

In his interview with the Senate committee staff, he refused to discuss any conversations he had with the President or any knowledge he obtained in his position as a "conduit" of information intended for Mr. Nixon. He declared that the doctrine of executive privilege required

him to withhold this material.

In his days of power at the White House, Mr. Haldeman was one of the few staff members who had personal access to the President. Other officials of the Administration and the election campaign were required to go through Mr. Haldeman to see or pass information to the President.

Mr. Haldeman gave the committee staff the following explanation of his concept of executive privilege:

"In a general sense, where I would not raise the question of privilege is where I was acting in effect as a principal on my own cognizance, not at the

Continued on Page 12, Column 1

Mr. Haldeman told the committee staff that it was possible that espionage reports were sent to his office before the Watergate burglary but that he did not recall seeing them and never ordered such ma-

Continued From Page 1, Col. 8

specific direction of the President, and where I did not transmit the information that I acquired back to the President.

"This is as contrasted to the area where, hypothetically, the President says, 'Haldeman, find out information on matter X. He tells me and I go in to the President and say this is what is happening on matter X. In that situation I am acting as a conduit.'"

Executive privilege is the doctrine that the internal, advisory communications of the executive branch deserve protection from public disclosure to protect the President's frank recommendations, opinions and considerations.

Since Mr. Haldeman's interview, the White House position on executive privilege has changed, and present and former staff members have been instructed to tell all they know to the committee.

To Be Queried Again

The committee staff is planning to interrogate Mr. Haldeman again before he appears as a public witness, probably toward the end of this month.

Mr. Haldeman, in his interview, made the following points that have been contradicted by other witnesses:

He said that he did not know until this March that there was a White House cover-

up of the facts about the burglary of the Democratic national offices on June 17, 1972. Mr. Magruder swore to the Senate committee in public testimony last month that he gave Mr. Haldeman all the details of the break-in and the cover-up in January.

Mr. Haldeman said that he did not know that Herbert L. Porter, a campaign official, had been induced by Mr. Magruder to commit perjury at the Watergate trial. Mr. Magruder testified that he also told Mr. Haldeman in January about Mr. Porter.

Mr. Haldeman stated that he did not "have occasion in September-October, 1972, after the return of the indictments to congratulate Dean for the job he had done." Mr. Dean testified last month that on Sept. 15, the day the original Watergate indictments were returned, he was called into the President's office and that the President, with Mr. Haldeman present, congratulated him for having seen to it that top campaign officials were not indicted.

Mr. Haldeman's repeated statements that he took no part in the cover-up contrasted with Mr. Mitchell's statement yesterday that Mr. Haldeman had participated in "a design not to have the stories come out" because they might have jeopardized Mr. Nixon's bid for re-election.

terial destroyed. Gordon C. Strachan, who at the time was Mr. Haldeman's assistant in charge of political affairs, has told the committee staff that he sent information about the bugging operation to Mr. Haldeman and that, after the arrests, Mr. Haldeman ordered the espionage reports destroyed.

Controlled Cash Fund

Mr. Haldeman acknowledged that, for a time, he controlled a \$350,000 cash fund and that, in January, 1973, Mr. Strachan turned the money over to Frederick C. Larue, an aide to Mr. Mitchell.

Mr. Haldeman also said that he knew that a "defense fund" was being raised to assist the Watergate defendants. But he told the committee staff that he did not know of any relationship between the cash fund and the "defense fund" and that he believed the "defense fund" was intended only to pay the defendants' legal fees.

Mr. Dean and others have said that a large share of the \$350,000 was used to buy the silence of the Watergate defendants.

Mr. Haldeman also acknowledged that he approved the hiring of Donald H. Segretti, a lawyer who has been accused of running an illegal sabotage operation against Democratic Presidential candidates. But Mr. Haldeman said that he insisted that there be a "specific stipu-

lation that he was not to engage in illegal or improper activities."

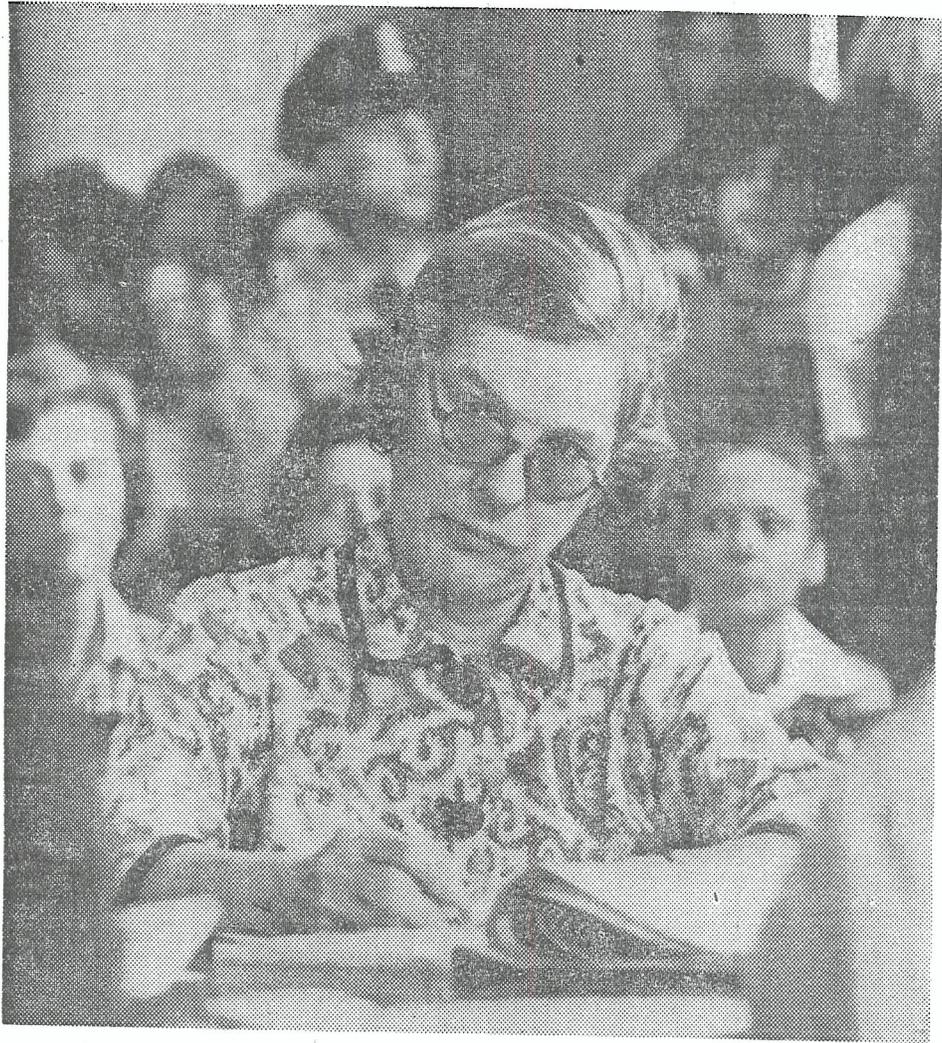
'Generally Aware'

As for the plumbers project—A White House operation that was designed to stop leaks of information to newsmen and that culminated in the burglary of the office of Dr. Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist—Mr. Haldeman said that he was "generally aware" of the over-all project but did not know of the activities of E. Howard Hunt Jr. and G. Gordon Liddy, two of the plumbers who were later convicted in the Watergate conspiracy.

One part that Mr. Haldeman is said to have played in the Watergate cover-up was not brought up in the interview because it had not then been disclosed.

In late May, Lieut. Gen. Vernon A. Walters, deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency, swore in an affidavit that Mr. Haldeman had ordered him after the Watergate burglary to persuade L. Patrick Gray 3d, then acting director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, to call of an F.B.I. investigation into campaign funds that had been passed through a Mexican bank and into the hands of one of the men arrested in the break-in.

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Mary McCarthy, the author, taking notes at the hearing yesterday