

MOORE SAYS NIXON REGRETTED IN MAY NOT SEEING 'CLUES'

Aide Reports President Was
Troubled at Not Knowing
of Cover-Up Earlier

REBUTS DEAN EVIDENCE

JUL 14 1973
Testifies He Didn't Believe
Nixon Knew of Details
at March Meetings

NYTimes

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 13— President Nixon was deeply troubled last May that he did not recognize the Watergate cover-up earlier, according to a White House official who saw him often throughout the spring.

Richard A. Moore, one of the few witnesses to appear before the Senate Watergate committee who still works at the White

House, told the committee today that Mr. Nixon had remarked to him at a private meeting on May 8:

"I have racked my brain, I have searched my mind. Were there any clues I should have seen that should have tipped me off?"

The President went on to say, according to Mr. Moore, that "maybe there were" such clues and that he still wondered whether he should have noticed them, despite the myriad other matters competing for his attention.

Clearer Picture Yet

This picture of the President's frame of mind last spring was the most detailed yet given to the committee and the television audience during the Watergate hearings, and it was painted by a long-time Nixon loyalist who now serves as an adviser on how best to present the President's image in public.

After the dramatic charges and denials of John W. Dean 3d and John N. Mitchell in re-

cent weeks, Mr. Moore provided almost Falstaffian relief.

In contrast to the well-rehearsed testimony and controlled manner of Mr. Dean, the former White House counsel, and Mr. Mitchell, the former Attorney General and campaign director, Mr. Moore often fumbled through the prepared statement he read yesterday to find answers to the Senators' questions, and regularly stammered when giving the answers.

But he was, as Senator Edward J. Gurney, the Florida Republican, noted, one of the few witnesses up to now who had no involvement in the Watergate burglary or the subsequent cover-up and who clearly had no axe to grind, thus, according to Mr. Gurney, lending credibility to his testimony.

And contradicting Mr. Dean,

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who testified that Mr. Nixon knew the truth about the Watergate scandal as early as last September, Mr. Moore declared:

"I knew in my heart, if you will, I was totally convinced that the President believed that no one in the White House had been involved and believed right up till he learned differently, I guess, March 21."

He repeated that he met with Mr. Nixon and Mr. Dean together four times from March 14 to March 20, and his accounts of the meetings varied little from those given the committee by Mr. Dean.

But Mr. Moore's interpretation of how much the President knew about the scandal during those meetings differed from Mr. Dean's.

Contrasting Versions

Mr. Dean told the committee that by March 14 he had already given the President some details of the cover-up of the burglary at Democratic national headquarters on June 17, 1972, including the fact that payments were being made to the defendants.

Mr. Moore testified that he had no indication that Mr. Nixon had such knowledge during the four meetings.

At one point in the meetings, Mr. Moore testified, Mr. Dean declared that Democratic Administrations had used the Federal Bureau of Investigation for political purposes, and he suggested that President Nixon order similar steps.

Mr. Moore said that the President shrugged off the idea and that nothing more was discussed about it.

As the two men walked out of the oval office on March 20, according to Mr. Moore, Mr. Dean told him that he did not believe the President was aware of the details and implications of the scandal. Mr. Moore said

that he urged Mr. Dean to tell the President all that he knew.

Mr. Dean, in his testimony, recalled the conversation with Mr. Moore but gave himself credit for taking the initiative to provide the President with full details.

By all accounts, Mr. Dean did that the next morning.

Request by Garment

Mr. Moore, who is 59 years old and who was once a practicing lawyer and television executive, appeared before the committee in part because Leonard Garment, now the President's counsel, asked the committee to hear Mr. Moore's testimony after Mr. Mitchell's.

The committee has not quite finished questioning Mr. Moore, and he is scheduled to return Monday morning to be interrogated by Senator Joseph M. Montoya, Democrat of New Mexico.

After Mr. Moore, the committee is scheduled to hear several men who are alleged to have been directly involved various aspects of the Watergate scandal.

They are Herbert W. Kalmbach, the President's former personal lawyer and a key Nixon fund-raiser, and Robert C. Mardian and Frederick C. LaRue, both key aides to Mr. Mitchell.

The hearings are scheduled for five days next week, and it is possible that all four men will have a chance to testify.

In an effort to show that there were what Mr. Moore called "clues" to the magni-

tude of the scandal that President Nixon should have recognized, Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr., the committee chairman, recounted a list of newspaper disclosures in the two months following the break-in at the Democratic headquarters in June, 1972.

Was there not "reason to suspect that something was rotten" in the re-election committee? Mr. Ervin, a North Carolina Democrat, asked.

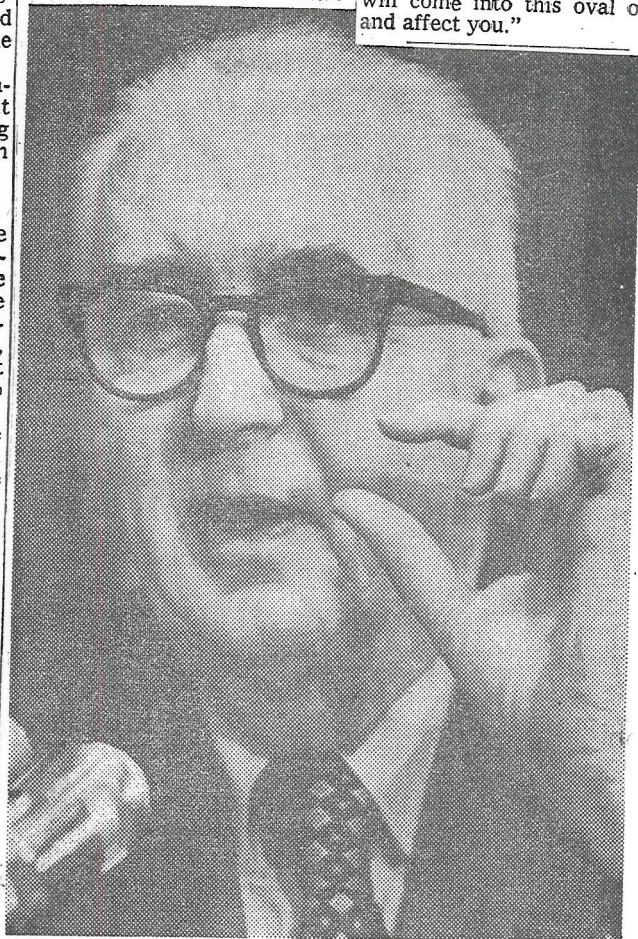
"Obviously, something was rotten, but I thought the rotten had been exposed," Mr. Moore responded, referring to the seven men who subsequently went on trial for conspiracy in the burglary.

He told the committee that he had known Mr. Nixon since the early nineteen-fifties and that he considered himself a personal friend.

Thus, he said, he sought a meeting with the President on April 20 — a few days after the President's speech at which he acknowledged having received "serious charges" about Watergate matters — and advised him to take the Easter weekend for contemplation of the Watergate situation and to seek outside legal help.

He said that he also urged Mr. Nixon to act quickly by saying:

"If you don't take action and get the facts quickly, then you will be accused of a cover-up of a cover-up, and that, sir, will come into this oval office and affect you."



Associated Press

Richard A. Moore testifies on talk with President Nixon