

Nixon Recordings

Haldeman Tells of Hearing 2 Tapes

He Swears They Refute Dean Story

Washington

H. R. Haldeman, once President Nixon's closest aide, said yesterday he had listened to tape recordings of two crucial meetings in the White House and that they do not support assertions by John W. Dean III that the President knew of the Watergate coverup.

"Certainly Mr. Dean did not advise him of it at the September 15 meeting," said Haldeman, formerly Mr. Nixon's chief of staff, in a lengthy opening statement read to the Senate Watergate Committee.

Dean has said remarks the President made at a meeting in September, 1972 indicated to him that Mr. Nixon was aware of the coverup.

Haldeman said he also listened to the tape of a meeting last March 21, which Dean said was the occasion when he told Mr. Nixon the entire Watergate story.

Haldeman said Dean gave Mr. Nixon a rundown on the break-in and said no one from the White House was involved, then told Mr. Nixon about funds paid out to defendants for their lawyers and families.

Dean also reported on a blackmail threat from defendant E. Howard Hunt and said it could cost \$1 million.

Haldeman said the President responded that "there is no problem in raising a million, but it would be wrong."

Dean had testified simply that Mr. Nixon said there would be no problem raising the million.

Haldeman said Mr. Nixon asked leading questions to try to get Dean's viewpoint and added, "This was often the President's way of doing things.

Like John D. Ehrlichman, who preceded him as a witness before the committee,

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Haldeman insisted that Mr. Nixon will be cleared when the facts are out.

"I have full confidence when the entire truth is known it will be clear to the American people that President Nixon had no knowledge of either the Watergate affair itself or a subsequent coverup," Haldeman said.

"It will be equally clear I had no such knowledge or involvement."

REPLAY

Haldeman's disclosure that he had heard the tapes of the two meetings was the first indication that anyone but the President has heard a replay.

The recordings, made automatically in the President's office, have been the subject of a constitutional argument yet to be resolved by the courts.

Haldeman, one of the three or four people in the White House who knew that the Nixon recording devices existed, said he heard the March 21 recording in April while he was still chief of staff and the September 15 tape in the early part of July.

"I listened to the March 21 tape in my office at the White House and I listened to the September 15 tape in my residence," Haldeman said. He said he made notes.

Senator Joseph M. Montoya (Dem-N.M.) asked who was there when Haldeman played the September 15 tape in his home.

"No one," said Haldeman. "Who was present when you played the March 21 tape?"

"No one." "I think it's a strange thing that Mr. Haldeman can hear the tapes but this committee cannot hear them," said Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr. (Dem-N.C.), the committee chairman.

The White House, through a letter from the new counsel J. Fred Buzhardt, informed Haldeman's lawyer the witness could testify to portions of the meetings he attended.

But the instructions were that "if asked to testify about meetings or portions of meetings which he did not attend, but learned solely by listening to tapes, Mr. Haldeman has been instructed not to testify."

PRIVILEGE

The committee ruled that the claim of executive privilege is not valid. Ervin told Haldeman "that if you were permitted to hear what the tapes said, you can tell us what the tapes said of your version of it."

Haldeman said he knew of no transcript made of the tapes.

"Were you authorized by the President to hear these tapes?" asked Senator Howard H. Baker Jr. (Rep-Tenn.).

"Yes," said Haldeman. "I heard them at the President's authority and for the purpose of reporting their contents to the President."

Mr. Nixon, in refusing to release the tapes to the Senate panel or special Watergate prosecutor, said their contents might be subject to misinterpretation, but insisted they show him innocent.

Later in the day, deputy press secretary Gerald L. Warren acknowledged that two other White House staffers had also heard some tapes.

He said Stephen V. Bull, a special assistant to the President, had listened to a tape of a March 14 Nixon-Dean meeting and that Buzhardt heard a recording of a March 20 telephone call between the President and Dean.

DEAN

Dean had said that on Sept. 15, 1972, when indictments were returned against the seven Watergate conspirators, the President congratulated him on doing a good job. Dean said he took this to mean the President was praising him for keeping White House personnel out of the indictments and thus concluded Mr. Nixon knew of coverup efforts.

"There was no mood of exuberance or excitement on the President's part at the time the indictments were brought down," Haldeman said. "He does not take joy from the misfortunes of other people . . .

"Naturally, however, it was good news as far as the White House and the administration were concerned . . . this confirmed what Mr. Dean had been telling us."

But Haldeman said that the President did not open that meeting with the statement that 'Bob has kept me posted on your handling of the Watergate' . . . he said 'Hi, this was quite a day, you've got Watergate on the way.'"

TESTIMONY

Haldeman said Dean assured the President that "nothing would come out to surprise us . . . the President did at that point comment Dean for his handling of the Watergate matter."

Haldeman added: "I really disagree with the conclusion that the President was aware of any type of coverup and certainly Mr. Dean did not advise him of it at the September 15 meeting."

Haldeman said in the portion of the March 21 meeting he attended the subjects discussed were the grand jury, the Senate committee, executive privilege and also Ehrlichman's theory that

everybody should go to the grand jury without immunity from prosecution.

Dean, Haldeman said, was

insistent at White House personnel be permitted to testify before the grand jury only under immunity from prosecution.

TIME

Haldeman echoed earlier testimony that Mr. Nixon felt Haldeman and Ehrlichman were spending too much time on Watergate in February and directed Dean to take over.

"I have the feeling that during this period the President was gradually getting more of a feel of the possibility that there might be some problems involved in the Watergate matter that he had not even dreamed of—and that led to the meeting of March 21 in which John Dean was going to give the President the full story," Haldeman said.

DOUBTS

Haldeman also said he seriously doubted that a March 13 meeting with Mr. Nixon that Dean testified about actually took place.

Dean had said he told the President then that demands by the Watergate defendants might cost \$1 million or more and "he told me that that was no problem and he also looked over at Haldeman and repeated the same statement."

Haldeman said a discussion of some of the matters in that meeting actually took place March 21—the day Dean said he warned Mr. Nixon about "a cancer on the presidency."

REPORT

Haldeman said Dean was told at a March 22 meeting to prepare a full written report. Dean denied he was ever given such an order; he said the President sent him and his wife to Camp David to think things over.

"Through this period of time, I still had full confidence in John Dean and I think the President did," Haldeman said. "He had not in any way hit himself except on the indirect point that there was a possible circumstantial chain of evi-

dence leading to a charge of obstruction of justice."

But Haldeman said that Dean started dropping indications then that Jeb Stuart Magruder and possibly John N. Mitchell had serious legal problems.

At Camp David, according to all accounts, Dean was not able to produce a report for Mr. Nixon.

"By the 30th of March Dean had not delivered any report," Haldeman said "and the President stopped dealing with Dean. In effect he had stopped dealing with him after the 23rd."

On March 30 Mr. Nixon announced that no one in the White House would appear at the Senate hearings, but all would testify before the grand jury if called. That also was the day that Mr. Nixon put Ehrlichman officially onto the Watergate investigation.

Haldeman said he and Dean were on the telephone daily in the April 1-7 period when Dean said he was kept incommunicado.

Ehrlichman and Haldeman were in San Clemente, Calif., during that week. On their return there were a number of meetings with Dean.

"By the end of the week both Dean and Ehrlichman had come to the view that Mitchell had approved the Watergate plan and there was some discussion that, if that were a fact, and if Mitchell had approved the ward and say so, it would be a major step in clearing up the Watergate mystery," Haldeman said.

But, he added, there was no talk of asking Mitchell to be a scapegoat, as Dean had testified.

Haldeman said it became clear to him by the end of April that he could no longer perform his White House duties effectively.

"I concluded I should resign," he said, "and the President agreed. I resigned on April 30." *Associated Press*



H. R. HALDEMAN AT HEARING
Former White House chief of staff testified