

Colson Sides With 2 Nixon Ex-Aides

By Jack Anderson
and Les Whitten

Former White House aide Charles Colson secretly told the Senate Watergate committee a tale that meshes closely with those of his ex-colleagues John Ehrlichman and H. R. Haldeman.

We have one of the closely guarded summaries of Colson's closed-door interview with committee staffers in preparation for his testimony next month and have verified its authenticity with Colson.

In it, the brisk, buccaneer Colson sided with the White House Hans-and-Fritz team and painted a slippery picture of former presidential counsel John W. Dean III. Nowhere did Colson deeply implicate himself or indicate that President Nixon knew of the Watergate cover-up as Dean has charged.

Indeed, Colson charged Dean with his own cover-up.

Colson asserted that he sent a memo to Dean outlining some incriminating evidence. "Dean came to (Colson) that day or the next day and told him to destroy (his copy of) it because it impeaches (Nixon campaign Deputy Jeb) Magruder," recorded the summary.

"He did not destroy it," the committee document goes on. Later, Colson told Haldeman and Ehrlichman about his talk with Dean.

Dean also ordered convicted Watergate conspirator H. How-

ard Hunt out of the country after the Watergate break-in, according to a Hunt conversation with Colson's secretary. In the same conversation, Colson reported, Hunt said that "the big boy"—presumably former Attorney General John N. Mitchell—"demanded they go through with the (Watergate) operation." Mitchell has denied similar charges by others.

Missing from Colson's talk with the staffers is the brash tone that was his hallmark at the White House. To the contrary, there appear to be moments of contrition in his statement, some details of which already have been revealed.

"I approved two ads which were worked up and presented to me for approval and I possibly contributed something to the ads," he conceded. The two ads used names of persons without their permission to attack opponents of the White House Indochina policy.

At another point, he admitted that "Hunt came to me and said he had some hot information with regard to Chappaquiddick . . . and I told him to get it. It did not turn out to be anything significant."

"Hunt," he went on, "made only two trips at my request, one was for the Chappaquiddick papers and the other was to Denver to interview Dita Beard" whose famous memo tied a huge ITT antitrust settlement to a \$400,000 GOP convention offer by ITT.

Besides his activist role, Colson received "Chapman's reports"—the memos sent to former Nixon aide Murray Chotiner from two of Chotiner's spies in the McGovern press party. "Colson has no knowledge of any other dirty tricks type activities," insists the summary of Colson's statements.

In fact, Colson denied vehemently a claim by Magruder that Colson pushed him to implement the Watergate bugging plan. "Colson called Magruder, who he did not think was doing a very effective job, and told him in no uncertain terms that he should give Hunt and (Watergate convicted conspirator, Gordon) Liddy his ear," the Colson summary admitted. But Colson has repeatedly denied he knew bugging was part of the plan.

When the Watergate scandal did break, claimed Colson, he "had a meeting with campaign people wherein he strongly urged that those responsible should be cleaned out."

Footnote: In the confidential four-page summary, obtained by our reporter, Ruth Jones, Colson is quoted as saying he thought he told Haldeman certain details of Dean's cover-up efforts in January, 1973. Colson told us this is inaccurate as well as other sections of the memo.

Bombs Away—Even as nine years of American bombing in Southeast Asia was coming to a

halt, a ship loaded with bombs was leaving the East Coast for Southeast Asia.

We have established the identity of the ship, and confirmed that it is under charter to the Military Sealift Command. Although its listed port-of-call is a friendly Pacific land, the ultimate destination of the bombs is Thailand: Because of its explosive cargo and the danger of violent reaction at one of its stops, we have decided not to name it.

Air Force spokesmen say the bombs are intended as "War Readiness Materials"—the stockpile of military ordnance kept ready in a number of points around the globe to be used in case of war.

Leaf Thief—Petty pilferage by congressional staffers has contributed to a potted plant panic on Capitol Hill.

For years, the national Botanic Garden has supplied plants to festoon congressional offices. Each one is allowed three small plants and one large plant per month. But demand has gone up from 6,000 in 1968 to 9,000 in 1972 and present needs are running even higher.

Popular rubber plants have been out of stock for six months, and not even small plants are in the offing for several weeks. Adding to the greenage crunch is the increased demand on the Botanic Garden to provide plants for exhibitions.

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